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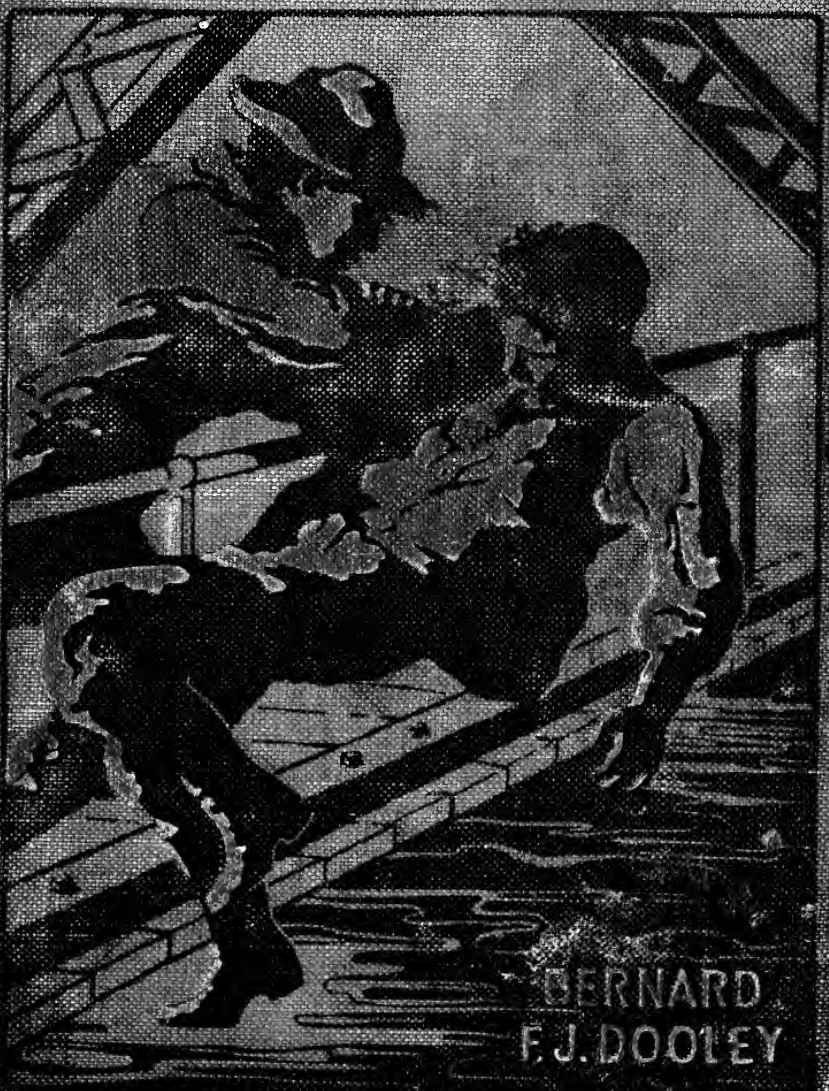

BERNARD F.J. DOOLEY

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SCOUTING FOR SECRET SERVICE

BY

BERNARD F. J. DOOLEY

NEW YORK
P. J. KENEDY & SONS

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SCOUTING FOR SECRET SERVICE

I

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

"FRANK!"

A soft voice came from the darkness, quivered for a moment in the dead silence of the night, and fainted away softer than it came.

"Frank! Wake up!"

Again the call came, low and soft, but more insistent and this time it produced the required result. There was a slight movement in the opposite bed and a sleepy voice muttered a question with a note of complaint in it.

"Huh? What do you want?"

"Sh-s-sh, don't talk so loud."

"That you, George?" Frank asked, stirring uneasily.

"Yes. Listen. D' you hear that noise?"

On the instant, a weird cry came from the blackness of the night, echoed across the island and was lost again in the darkness.

"Who-oo! Who-oo! Who-oo!"

It arose with startling suddenness and died faintly away.

"George, what is it?"

"Sh-s-sh! Listen!"

This time a different cry arose, directly in front of the porch on which their beds were placed, stranger, more weird and startling even, than the other. It was like the whinny of a horse, and it quivered and trembled, and then died away like some one sobbing in pain. Coming from the great black maw of the night, small wonder that it terrified these two school boys, on a strange island and alone for the first time in their lives!

"Loo-oo-oo! Loo-oo-oo! Loo-oo-oo!"

When the cry was repeated, both boys sat bolt upright in bed and peered anxiously into the blackness that surrounded them. There was little consolation for them in the fact (even had they known it) that their sleeping porch commanded an extensive view of the island and lake, for now the wall of darkness that pressed them on all sides was unrelieved by any ray of light and they could only sit in tense silence and strain their eyes in the direction whence the sounds came.

"George! What-what's it?"

Frank's words were barely audible, they were spoken so low.

"That first cry was like an owl's. I don't know what the second was," George answered.

They remained quiet for a few minutes, watching and listening, every muscle tense as they waited for something to happen. Suddenly George whispered again:

"Look, Frank, see those lights?"

Far out on the lake, the night was pierced by a bright ray that flashed and disappeared as sud-

denly as it came. It flashed again quickly and again the black throat of the night swallowed it. Closer to them and coming from the lake shore near the boathouse, two lights flared swiftly in answer to the first signal.

"George, what *does* it mean?" Frank Lawrence leaned toward his companion and his fingers closed tightly around George's arm.

"You tell me," George answered in a hushed voice. "I woke up bang out of sleep and heard that noise coming from the lake. The owl hooted twice before I called you."

"Did you see the lights before?"

"No, I didn't. They puzzle me more than the cries. Those calls could come from birds, but I can't explain the lights at all."

"A mystery—that's what you like," Frank reminded his friend. "You're always looking for mysteries to solve. Here's one the first night."

George laughed softly and although there was not much mirth in it, it helped to relieve the strain and it put Frank in better humor.

"You might have guessed we'd be in for it the minute we started on this wild trip," George said, stifling his laughter. "Cheer up, Frank, we are here now and we won't let any one or any thing scare us away until we start for Yale!"

"Strikes me like part of my uncle's scheme to try our nerves. A kind uncle he is," Frank added, bitterly.

"Hold up! Don't jump at conclusions," George cautioned. "Remember what Brother Alpheus said—and Mr. David."

"I haven't forgotten—but I can't forget, either, what my father said about him."

"We're here now and maybe your uncle will think differently of us before the summer is over. Can't tell—maybe you'll even have a better opinion of him. Listen! What's that!"

They stopped whispering and caught a faint, squeaking noise coming from the lake. The flash lights flared a number of times and from the shore came the sound of feet scraping and shuffling on the shingle.

"Frank!—that squeak? That was an oarlock."

"Yes, and some one is walking on the shore."

"Great guns! Is some one trying to break into the boathouse or tower?"

The noise on the beach continued for several minutes and it was certainly the tramping of a number of men walking carefully. No more lights were flashed and after a while all was quiet again. The boys watched and listened, but no sound broke the silence.

"George, is that a light I see, or am I dreaming?" Frank asked, leaning closer to his companion. "Look there—over the foot of my bed."

George obeyed and saw a thin streak of light piercing the gloom. It appeared; then went out, only to appear again.

"That comes from the lookout tower," George said. "You remember it, don't you? It's near this end of the boathouse."

"Yep. But what's happening inside? All of these goings-on in the dead of night make me shiver. I'm beginning to think we've got a big

job on our hands. Oh, just the same I wish we were back in our little rooms in your father's house on the hill!"

"You are a great hero," George said good-naturedly. "If I knew more about this house and island, I'd go down and investigate."

"Better stay where you are. Remember, it was dark when we got here last night. You don't know any more about this island than you do about China," Frank cautioned, with a little groan of disgust. "Besides," he continued, "if those fellows are thieves and they want anything, they'll come up after it."

"Will daylight never come?" George muttered. "I can't stand these unsolved mysteries."

"Ugh, you and your mysteries. I thought you liked 'em."

"I do, if I get a chance to unravel them."

"It's cold," was Frank's reply as he slid down under the bedclothes. "B-r-r, I'm shivering."

"Scared," George said soothingly. "You're all worked up about your uncle. You rest quietly in bed and I'll go down and investigate. Where's the flash light?"

He threw aside the bedclothes and leaped out of bed. With a quick movement, Frank sprang up and stood beside his friend.

"If you go, I'll go with you. Here is the flash light. I had it under my pillow. Don't light it until we get inside."

"All right, come along."

They proceeded cautiously along the dark porch and entered the bedroom. George switched on the

flash light and shaded it with his hand and they passed through the room, into the hall and stopped at the head of the stairs. Switching off the light, they stood in the darkness and listened, but no sound came from any part of the house.

"Are you satisfied now?" Frank asked.

"Yes, come back to bed. No use going downstairs, we might fall into the cellar."

They retraced their steps and locked the bedroom door behind them, and tumbled into bed.

"All is quiet in No-Man's-Land," George mumbled, burying his head in his pillow. "I wonder what next."

"You never can tell. See, that light has gone and I trust the night-prowlers have gone with it."

"You have expressed my fondest hopes."

For a long time they lay quiet and neither spoke. A gentle breeze whispered through the pines and from the lake came a swishing, gurgling noise made by the rippling waves as they lapped the shore. Overhead, the great, black curtain of night was rolling back from the heavens. Some stars appeared, flashed feebly for a few minutes and then faded from view as quickly as they came. In the east a few faint bars of silver streaked the heavens and gradually spread over the sky. A robin awoke with a start and his clear cries resounded through the woods. These were the first signs of day.

George had fallen asleep, but Frank had too much to think about and he could not compose himself. He sat up in bed and wrapped the blankets around his body. Packing the pillows against the

head of the bed, he lay back watching for the slightest signs of life and listening for any sounds that would betray the presence of the intruders.

Frank sat quiet and thoughtful, while the silver bars in the east spread over the entire sky and gradually gave way before the rose dawn that leaped from behind the towering mountains on the far horizon. From the lake, a thin, filmy mist was lifting and it slowly and lazily floated upward, until it was driven away by the advancing sunbeams. From the mist-filled dawn crept the outlines of the lookout tower, the boathouse, the dark pine-bordered woods, the white sand on the shore; and at last the blue waters of the lake could be seen. With a great bound the sun leaped up into the heavens and the clear day walked once more upon the earth.

Startled from his reverie by a noise on the shore, Frank looked in that direction and a sharp cry was caught just on his lips. He leaned toward his companion in the opposite bed, grasped him by the shoulder and shook him vigorously.

"George, George! Wake up, quick!"

"Wha-what's the matter?"

"Not so loud! Look out there." Frank's trembling finger pointed at the object that proved so startling.

George sat up in bed and his gaze sought the point indicated. Between the lookout tower and the boathouse, a large rock rose above the sand, its top flat and wide, like a platform. Upon this the boys saw a queer-looking man standing, and the gray light of the morning made him appear like

a creature from another world. He wore no hat or coat and plainly there was a hump between his shoulders. He remained immovable for a short time, then leaped from the rock and disappeared behind the lookout tower.

"George! Do you think—is that my uncle?"

Frank's voice faltered as he struggled to suppress his rising anger. From childhood the very mention of this uncle had been enough to stir up in him strong feelings of dislike and distrust. That he should catch his first glimpse of this uncle after a night of fright which he believed was part and parcel of an underhand plan, made him disgusted.

"Frank," his companion whispered earnestly, "I don't believe that man's your uncle."

"After what Jim Morton told us on the train?" Frank asked.

"I don't believe Jim Morton, and you know it."

"He seemed all right to me. Besides, why should he lie about these things?"

"Yes, and why should Mr. David lie? He told us that Mr. Lawrence went west."

"My uncle could easily deceive Mr. David."

"Of course, but it would be mighty queer if he invited us here and then tried to scare us the first night with such silly tricks. Anyhow," George continued, yawning and stretching leisurely, "there's something wrong about this night's work. If your dear uncle is back of all this, we'll let him know from the beginning that we're not cowards and he can't scare us away."

He carefully wrapped the bedclothes around his shoulders.

"Forget it, Frankie boy. Go to sleep. It's daylight and I don't think the night-prowlers will bother us any more."

With a sigh, George settled himself comfortably and was soon breathing quietly in sleep. Frank's bitterest thoughts came flocking upon him to keep him from rest. He tossed about for a while, then settled down and lay staring at the ceiling, as he tried to fit into some kind of complete picture the events of the past two weeks which had landed him in this bed at this hour of the night.

II

A STRANGE REQUEST

IT was two weeks ago that Brother Alpheus of the Academy had walked into the parlor and to his surprise and delight found his old classmate, John David, awaiting him.

"Well, of all people on earth, I never expected to see you in Hercules," Brother Alpheus cried, shaking his friend's hand vigorously. "What brought you so far away from the noise of Broadway?"

"Business, of course," Mr. David replied, sinking leisurely into a chair. "You cannot follow the wanderings of a lawyer. He'll bob up in the most unexpected places. But tell me about yourself. How do you like Hercules, Brother Alpheus?" the lawyer asked, surveying his friend with quick, sharp glances. "You've not grown fatter. Does the up-State atmosphere agree with you?"

"Everything is agreeable, the air, the food and the work and I assure you we have plenty of each."

"You look as though you worked hard enough. It's not all fun, being a director."

"This year is the worst, because it's my first experience as boss."

"Well, you're graduating some of your young

scamps, aren't you? There's one I know of, and I came to talk about him," Mr. David said, drawing a bundle of papers from his pocket.

"You have a boy here, named Frank Lawrence, who's just about through?"

Brother Alpheus nodded.

"Of course you know that Frank is an orphan and lives with the Harveys, but perhaps you'd never heard that I'm Frank's guardian? His father didn't leave much money or property to guard, poor fellow, but by careful handling we've managed to keep Frank in school until now."

"Fine," Brother Alpheus commented; "Frank's a good boy who appreciates the education he's getting."

"Well, that pleases me, too—for I've got some more to offer him. Let me tell this proposition to you before I put it to him and let's see if you'll back me up. If he sees it in its true light, it will mean a college course in whatever line he desires."

It would have taken a court stenographer to have caught all of Mr. David's rapid-fire details and answers to Brother Alpheus' questions, but after a while the latter was vigorously giving his assent.

"I am sure he will accept your proposal because he is eager to continue his studies."

"I know it's a strange request and coming from Frank's uncle—well, Frank just dislikes him, to say the least," Mr. David responded, dubiously.

"That is a real obstacle in your path," Brother Alpheus answered, "for from studying Frank's disposition I have learned that he is not inclined

to forgive very quickly. He 'holds a grudge,' as the boys would say."

"Frank has heard a great deal about Edward Lawrence to make him suspect that relative, I know, but don't you think we can get him to listen to reason?"

"If you can convince him that his uncle wasn't entirely to blame—that will be better than trying to show him how he himself will profit."

"There!—that's the reason I called on you first—to learn something about the boy—and I want your help in persuading him to accept this proposal."

Brother Alpheus consulted his watch.

"It is half-past ten and Frank's free the next class period. I'll telephone over to the school and tell one of the Brothers to send him over."

"If George Harvey is free, tell him to come along. This invitation includes George and I want him here to learn everything."

"That gives you another strong ally," Brother Alpheus assured the lawyer. "George Harvey has great influence over Frank, and of course he hasn't Frank's prejudices against the uncle."

In a few moments the boys were ushered into the parlor.

"Here they are, Mr. David. Of course you know your own protégé," the Brother said, motioning toward Frank.

"I know him quite well, although I saw him but once. How are you, Frank? Don't you remember your guardian?" the lawyer asked, shaking the boy's hand.

"I'm afraid I wouldn't know you," Frank said, returning the hearty hand clasp nevertheless. "I met you when father died but I was too upset to notice any one."

"This is the other member of the company of Harvey and Lawrence," the Brother said, indicating George, whose face was wreathed with smiles as he eagerly watched the unusual proceedings.

"The harder member, I'll wager," the lawyer responded, returning George's vigorous grip.

"Sit down, boys. Mr. David has a most interesting story to tell you. I wish I were one of the prospective actors."

"It is too bad we cannot include you, Brother. I know how you enjoy outdoor life. I'm sorry that you're counted out."

The lawyer cleared his throat and drummed a tattoo on the bundle of papers he held in his hand.

"I suppose you boys are both pleased and sorry that your high school days are over. But what next? How about college? Have you hopes and ambitions in that direction for this coming autumn?"

"Both of us want to go; my father has agreed but we were wondering if you would let Frank go," George said, gazing intently at Mr. David.

"Well, Frank, what have you to say?" the lawyer asked, smiling at his ward.

"Of course I want to go—this very fall, if I can. I meant to ask you when I graduated."

"Well, Frank, a college course is open to you, also a very bright future, if you will agree to a plan for a strenuous summer. The idea is your

uncle's—to prove that you know how to use opportunities. This comes from Edward Lawrence."

At the mention of his uncle's name a frown gathered between Frank's eyebrows and a sullen expression crept over his face. He did not speak, but the change in mood was not lost upon the lawyer. He ignored it and continued.

"In the first place, have you boys made any special plans for vacation?"

"No, we haven't, but George and I would like to spend a couple of weeks camping."

"Very good," Mr. David said, smiling at them. "Instead of spending a couple of weeks, how would you like to spend the entire summer in the Adirondack Mountains?"

"The Adirondack Mountains for the summer! Oh, I should say so!" George cried eagerly. "Come on, Frank, let's get started!"

George's enthusiasm cooled considerably, however, when he saw the look upon Frank's face. The frown and sullen expression had grown very black and there was something about Frank that chilled and alarmed him. He looked from his friend to Brother Alpheus and Mr. David, and he noticed how intently they were watching Frank.

"You boys shall have your wish," Mr. David responded in a voice which suggested that everything was agreeably settled. "Last week, Frank," he continued, "I had a conference with your Uncle Edward, and he asked me to deliver this message to you. He wants you and your friend, George Harvey, to occupy his private camp for the summer. This camp is in the Adirondack Mountains

and is situated on an island in a body of water called 'The Lake-of-the-Clustered-Stars.' "

The lawyer paused for but a breath and to clear his throat.

"That is not all. You boys must occupy the camp alone. You'll get your own meals and take care of yourselves; you'll be thrown upon your own resources and do for yourselves."

"Why does he want us to do a foolish thing like that?" Frank demanded, scowling. "Much either of us knows about camping in the mountains alone! We can run a row boat or a motor boat—but as for guns and tents—ump! Isn't that a crazy thing to ask?"

Of the listeners, George was, perhaps, most startled at the boy's tone. He had never seen his friend in so ugly a mood.

Brother Alpheus said nothing, but Mr. David responded mildly, ignoring his ward's sullenness. "Why, yes, I suppose it is out of the ordinary. But then, I also acknowledge that your uncle has his own ideas about boys of the present day. He thinks the boys of this generation are weaklings and sissies and if they were thrown upon their own resources, most of them would not succeed or even live. He feels that you are a real Lawrence, with all their good qualities, and he wants you to prove it."

"Why does he come around now with his crazy schemes? He paid no attention to me until now, and then he asks me to do something foolish. If he thought so much of his name and family, why

didn't he help my father and keep him from failing in business?"

Anger burned in Frank's eyes as he poured out his hot, bitter words. The pent-up emotion of years of brooding upon these alleged wrongs was back of every word he uttered, and for a moment it silenced the others. Then Mr. David spoke slowly and calmly in an endeavor to pacify the boy.

"I agree with you, Frank, that this is a strange scheme. At least it's bound to look that way to most people who have lived in cities and had everything made easy for them. But is it so crazy, after all, to think that two strapping high-school boys should be able to take care of themselves on an island for three months?

"Now, let me answer your charges against your uncle, that he neglected you and your father, at the time of the business failure. In the first place, your uncle never lost sight of you. When your father died, your uncle came to me and asked about your finances. I told him what was left and assured him it would keep you for a while. He told me to call upon him for any amount of money if ever you needed it. Not only that, I have sent him reports of you, and he has taken the deepest interest in your work. He had planned to attend your graduation, but he got an unexpected call to the west.

"Secondly," the lawyer continued, "your uncle did not abandon your father in his business difficulties. Edward Lawrence did not know your father's business was in such a bad mess. He

knew your father was in some trouble and he was ready and willing to help him, but your father was a proud man and never asked for help. As a matter of fact your uncle was the one who came to the rescue and saved the money that has supported and educated you these past few years."

Slowly the sullen expression on Frank's face was overcome by a look of surprise. He couldn't accept such information all at once, and he sat listless, gazing at the floor. His three companions watched him in silence and they knew that truth and prejudice were struggling for mastery.

"I—I didn't know that. I—I thought——" He paused and seemed incapable of speaking further.

"You thought your father had sought aid from his brother, and that Edward Lawrence deliberately refused to help him?" Mr. David asked.

"Yes, that's what I thought. My father didn't say that, but he often spoke harshly of Uncle Ed, and said his own brother had abandoned him," Frank answered.

"If you had the wrong story, I don't blame you for having some harsh feelings, but what I've told you about the affair just now is the truth of the matter. The trouble arose between your father and his brother Edward some years back. Your father and uncle were in business together, but could never agree. Your Uncle Ed was sick. He had weak lungs, due to a hump upon his back. Although a cripple, he had a keen mind for business. He wished to try a number of new ideas and schemes, but your father did not approve them. Then they quarreled and Ed Lawrence was taken

sick and went to the Adirondack Mountains. The hills of the north gave him both health and wealth."

Mr. David paused and waited for this information to sink deeply into the boy's mind. He knew that if he could put Edward Lawrence's case before Frank in a fair manner, his ward would accept the truth and put aside his bitter thoughts. A strong prejudice existed in Frank's mind, for he had heard only condemnation of his father's brother, and never a good word in his favor. There had gradually grown in Frank a feeling that his uncle was the cause of all his father's trouble and his final failure. This was what Mr. David struggled to overcome, and as he looked at the boy before him, he felt that the battle would be won.

"Remember, Frank, I am not placing all the blame upon your father. Your Uncle Edward is not entirely blameless. In fact, that is why he wishes to become your friend. He wants to make up to you for the opportunity he lost, of helping your father. You are his only living relative, and he has liked you and followed your career more than you realize."

"I know what you have said is true—and I believe you," Frank said. "How was I to know these things? My father never explained them to me. He never told me about that first trouble. He always blamed my uncle because he did not help him before the failure."

"As I said, your uncle did not know the true state of your father's business. He knew your

father was pressed for money, but he was afraid to offer help and his pride made him hold back until your father should ask for it. But your father was too proud to ask."

"Frank," Brother Alpheus interposed, "I hope you will accept this proposal. Don't let any ill feeling destroy your future prospects. Remember, it was pride and bitterness and hatred that kept your father and uncle apart and brought on all this trouble. You have it in your power to make reparation to your uncle and allow him to make reparation to you, to help you the way he should have helped your father. You have the power of doing a great amount of good. Don't look for revenge. Give your uncle a chance and give yourself a chance."

"I'll try to get those things out of my mind, Brother, but it seems to me, if my uncle wanted a chance to do right he would come to me openly, and not ask me to go on this wild-goose chase," Frank answered.

"Say," cried George, shaking his fist at his companion, "where do I come in? I want a vacation with thrills in it. Maybe we'll run on a mystery and do a little Sherlock Holmes business."

Frank's face brightened and he smiled good-naturedly.

"That's right, you always wanted to shoot a couple of wild cats, or jump off the top of a mountain. As for your mysteries, ugh, I'm sick of 'em!"

Frank made a comical face and then suddenly

grew serious. He pondered for a moment, and looked from his guardian to Brother Alpheus.

"I guess there's nothing else for me to do but accept the plans; and—and I hope they work out all right. I'd like to do the proper thing."

"Very good!" George cried.

"I'm glad you've decided to go," Brother Alpheus said. "Very glad," he repeated.

"You have chosen wisely," Mr. David assured Frank, greatly relieved. "I shall give you full instructions, and these are according to your uncle's plans. When school closes, you and George go to the north woods as soon as possible. You take a train from here to Utica, and there you change for the Adirondack Express. You change again at Lake Clear Junction, to the Village of Tamarack. Mr. Lawrence's Indian guide will meet you and take you to the camp named Forest Lodge, on Forest Island. That's in the Lake-of-the-Clustered-Stars. You'll find the camp stocked with food, guns, fishing-tackle and boats and the Indian guide will show you a few places to fish. Beyond that, he will have nothing to do with you. He will leave you to yourselves, to do your own work and seek your own fun."

The lawyer drew a check book from his pocket and wrote a number of checks. These he handed to Frank.

"To cover the expense of your trip to the north," he said. "These are travelers' checks, made out to you. If you need money, cash them in the American Express office at Tamarack."

Frank took the checks and the sheet of paper giving full instructions.

"When you are ready to go, send a letter to Peter Tahawus, Forest Lodge, Tamarack, New York. Peter is your uncle's Indian guide. Tell him the time of your arrival, and he will meet you at the station. There, I think I've given full instructions.

"There is one thing we have taken for granted; the permission of George Harvey's parents. They will agree with this plan, won't they, my boy?"

"They'll agree," George said grinning. "In fact," he continued, running his fingers through his hair, "my father will be glad. He has the same idea as Frank's uncle. A young fellow should get a few hard knocks, is his motto, and if this is all right with Mr. David and Brother Alpheus, my father will say, 'go ahead.' "

"Youth is a good time to get your knocks. You can stand them better and learn a few lessons from the thumps."

"Well, boys, that is all," Mr. David said, arising and shaking their hands. "Good luck and a pleasant summer! Write me your experiences, and if you need anything, let me know. Above all things, don't let the lonesomeness and dark nights drive you home. Your future is at stake, Frank, so fight it out for the summer."

"Will I see my uncle?" Frank asked.

"You may, but hardly before September. He is on his way west, perhaps to Alaska. I'll let you know more about it later."

When the boys departed, Mr. David resumed his seat and smiled at Brother Alpheus.

"That was easier than I expected. I hope they have a pleasant time."

"I shall write to an old friend who lives near Tamarack. In fact, his home is between the village and the Lake-of-the-Clustered-Stars. I'll tell him to watch the boys and give them a helping hand if necessary," Brother Alpheus said.

"Do that," the lawyer said heartily. "We'll all feel better if we know they have some one watching them."

III

THE JOURNEY NORTH

THE boys were graduated on June 9, and after the commencement exercises, they had ample time to prepare for their flight into the north woods and a summer in the open. On Monday morning, June 21, they waved farewell to Hercules and sped toward the city that is the gateway to the north. It seemed that they had scarcely boarded the train when the conductor came through the coach shouting: "Utica! this station is Utica!"

"Here's where we change," said Frank, hauling down the bags and placing them in the aisle.

"Thank goodness for a chance to exercise my legs!" George cried, wriggling impatiently. "I enjoy rides, but I'm stiff."

The train stopped with grinding brakes, and the boys caught up their bags and hurried to the station platform. They hailed a porter and asked directions.

"Adirondack Express on track 13, sir," the porter said, pointing across the train shed to a string of coaches waiting at the farthest point on the platform. "Go downstairs and turn to your right. Track 13, sir."

The boys went downstairs into a subway, or underground passage, and looked for number 13. They could not go astray, for a porter walked up

and down shouting the number of each track and the train and its list of stations. They made their way upstairs to the Adirondack Express. Here the conductor stood beside his train and from him they secured more information.

"This is the train you want. Change cars at Lake Clear Junction for Tamarack. We'll leave as soon as the Empire State Express pulls in."

"Let's go in and get our seats," George suggested, "then we can take a little exercise."

They picked out two seats in the day coach and put their baggage upon them. Returning to the platform, they went to the far end, away from the crowd, and began walking rapidly. After five minutes their pace slackened and George nudged his companion.

"Don't look now, but tell me if you've noticed those two men standing near that pile of trunks?"

"Yes," said Frank, giving George a quizzical look. "What about them?"

"They've watched us since we came out here on the platform," George answered.

"What of it? Our rushing up and down would attract anybody's attention."

"Maybe, but no one else took much notice of us. They followed us to this end of the station and watched us pretty close. They'll know us when we meet again."

"Of course they will, and you'll know them, Sherlock Holmes," Frank said, laughing at the serious expression on George's face.

"All right, laugh, but that doesn't change my opinion of them. I don't like their looks."

"Come, we'll go back to the train and get out of their sight. The Empire ought to get here soon—there's its whistle now—come along or we'll lose our seats."

The two boys scurried into their places just as the Express from New York rushed into the station. A number of passengers boarded the Adirondack train and in a short time it left the station and started north. It passed the grimy, black buildings that crowded close to the tracks, turned sharply to the right and sped out into the open country.

There was plenty of room in the coach, and the boys occupied two seats, lolling comfortably, and lazily watching the telegraph poles, the trees, and the farmhouses flash by in quick procession. George sat opposite his companion, studying a time-table.

"We've got a long journey ahead of us. We don't get to Tamarack until six-thirty to-night."

"That's the way I like to ride. And when we get into the mountains, we'll have plenty to see."

For that matter, there seemed to be enough to look at from the first. Fields of rich fallow lands, with fresh green crops raising their heads to the warm, life-giving June sun; far stretches of rolling pastures, spreading like green carpets to the dim horizon; herds of browsing cattle contentedly cropping the grass; clumps of trees, with here and there a flashing brook; all these rolled before their eyes as they tried to catch a glimpse of every new object that flashed past.

They had not traveled far, when they realized

that the train was climbing a steep grade. The swaying and jerky movement of the coach, the slow click-clicky-click of the wheels over the rails, the labored puffing of the engine, told them that they were gradually mounting into the foothills. The nature of the country changed too, and great, green hills bulged up on every side. The fields were less fertile, the pasture lands were strewn with stones and bowlders, and clumps of trees became more frequent. After they passed Remsen, the entire face of the landscape was different and the farther they traveled the more noticeable it became. Sandy soil, rocks, scrub pine, tangled underbrush—these were the first signs that they would soon plunge into the great woods of the north.

"We're getting there," George said, pointing from the window. "See the piles of kindling wood and those big logs. We must be near a lumber camp. How I wish I could see one and watch the men cut down the trees and haul them to the railroad. Look, the woods are thicker and the trees bigger."

The train swept on, plunging deeper and deeper into the forest. The trees crowded closer to the railroad tracks; spruce, pine, balsam, white birch, and more kinds of trees than the boys had ever seen. They could not name them, but they noted the varieties, especially the tamarack and spruce.

"See that stream! I bet there's trout in it!"

"Look, there's a lake! You can just see it between the trees."

"Think of it," cried George, "we'll have nearly

three months of it—in the mountains! Be happy, son," he continued, striking Frank on the knee.

"I'm happy," his companion said, catching some of his enthusiasm. "I'm just anxious to get to Forest Island and see what's waiting for us. What's the next station?"

"McKeever," said George, consulting his time-table.

The whistle blew sharply and with crunching brakes the train slowed and stopped.

"Quick, Frank, look, there they are at last, sawmills and logs, thousands of trees floating on that lake and river."

Their excitement as they crowded close to the windows and surveyed the scene before them, attracted the attention of more than one of the passengers in the coach—old-timers, no doubt, who were accustomed to such scenes in the foothills. Stretched along the bank of a small lake were a number of sawmills. Back of these were large piles of lumber and their unbroken line stretched as far as the eye could see. The small body of water to the north of the sawmills was jammed with freshly cut logs. They completely filled the lake and the river and lay piled high upon the banks. In the center of the river, to the right of the railroad tracks, there was a log-jam, where the freshly cut trees lay one on another in a towering heap.

"I wish I could see the logs float down from the mountains. I'd like to watch them sweep down the river."

"I wonder what they call that place where the logs come in?"

"Hello, boys, you seem interested in lumbering! Wonderful sight, eh!"

The boys turned, a little surprised. Smiling down upon them was a fat, well-dressed man, his eyes twinkling and his round face glowing with good humor at their evident surprise. To the boys' further amazement, they recognized him as one of the men who had watched them so closely in the Utica depot.

"Like to know what they call that lake jammed with logs?"

He crowded into the seat with George, and as Frank watched him, the happy, expansive smile upon this fat man's red, glowing countenance put him at his ease. The stranger pointed at the log-filled pond.

"The lumberjacks call that a sorting boom. These mills are owned by different companies, and they've all got logs in that boom with their trade-mark on them. The lumberjacks separate the logs and drive them into their owners' booms to be hauled up into the mills and cut into lumber."

"How do they get all the logs mixed that way?"

"These companies have lumber camps in the mountains and they all use the same streams to float the logs down. When the trees are felled, a marker puts the company's brand or trade-mark on the logs, and if they are mixed with other logs in the drive, they can be easily recognized and sorted in the boom."

"But how do they cut the trees and get the logs

out of the woods?" Frank asked eagerly, forgetting in his deep interest that they were talking to this particular stranger.

"Well, my boy, it's like this. The lumberjacks go into the woods every winter and cut the trees. If there is a railroad near the lumber camp, the men slide the logs down the mountains on the snow or drag them down by horse and chains. They load them on cars and they are dragged to the mills. If there is a stream handy, they run the logs upon the ice and in spring when the ice melts and breaks, the high water rushing along, carries the logs down to the mills, or even to a railroad, if the mills are far away from the stream. Sending the logs down the river in spring is called the big drive. Hundreds of men take part in the big drive and some of them stand on those logs and ride them while they are rushing down the stream."

"Men are sometimes killed in the drives, aren't they?" Frank asked.

"Yes, especially in a log-jam, like that one out there," the stranger said, pointing to the piled-up logs in the river. "Sometimes the men slip off a log and go under water and are drowned or crushed. But that's not every day. The men like this strenuous outdoor work."

"Good!" said Frank, smiling back at the stranger. "I always wanted to see the new logs and get a line on how they cut and haul lumber."

While Frank was thanking the stout gentleman, he couldn't help but notice how George remained silent and examined the stranger long and search-

ingly. The man appeared to weigh two hundred and fifty pounds and his flesh was loose and flabby. It seemed to bulge and stick out all over him, especially upon his face, where it hung in rolls on his cheeks and nearly hid his small, sharp eyes. George's face showed that he found something repulsive about the man and in spite of his jolly, friendly manner, the boy disliked him.

"Well, son, too interested to talk, eh?" he cried, nudging George and breaking into a loud laugh that shook his fat body and made the flesh on his cheeks tremble like jelly.

"I am interested," George answered stiffly. "Some day I shall study forestry."

"Very good; excellent," the stranger continued, tapping George on the knee with his fat finger. "Are you going to study the woods this summer, or are you on a vacation?"

"We are on a vacation; but we hope to learn something about the woods before we leave."

"Wonderful! I like your grit. I know the north woods myself. Maybe I can show you something that you don't know about trees and other things in the forest. I'll introduce you to the men that count in the lumber business. I spend a large part of my time in the mountains, especially at Tamarack. I make that village my headquarters."

"You remain in Tamarack most of your time? Perhaps you know Edward Lawrence?" Frank asked, looking to see how George would take this turn in the conversation.

The stranger drew himself up and became very serious and dignified.

"Know him!" he cried, like one indignant and insulted at such a question. "Know him! Why, every one in these here parts knows Ed Lawrence."

He waved his hands in wide circles over his head, then rested them upon his knees and leaned impressively toward Frank and regarded him with such a show of seriousness that the boy felt humbled and sorry he had asked such a foolish question.

"Know him!" continued the fat man. "Why, boy, up here we call him, 'King of the North Country.' He owns half the lumber interests, most of the iron mines, three small railroads, a couple of hotels—why, boy, I can't tell you all my friend, Ed Lawrence, owns. Yes, sir, 'King of the North Country' we call him. Do you know him, too?"

"He's my uncle," responded Frank.

"Your uncle!" exclaimed the other, expanding and glowing on Frank. "Your uncle! Well, well, shake hands, my boy, with Big Jim Morton. That's me. I do business with Ed Lawrence, and I tell you, boy, Ed Lawrence is a great man. Some people don't like him and they call him the 'Mountain Dwarf', on account of his size and shape and the hump upon his back. Let me tell you, he beats them all, does Ed Lawrence."

For a moment Frank's face was aglow with delight at the praise afforded his uncle. This slowly gave way to anger, as he remembered once more how this rich uncle had left his father to die in failure and poverty. This man, Edward Lawrence, "King of the North Country," could

easily have saved him, his own brother, but he hadn't raised a finger. As Frank dwelt on these thoughts, his anger grew; bitterness took possession of his soul, and he felt himself slipping back into his former mood. He gave himself a jerk and recalling John David's assurances that his uncle had not known how badly his help was needed, he looked up into Jim Morton's face.

That big countenance was stamped with surprise. Big Jim Morton had watched Frank through half-closed eyes and noted the change that had come over the boy. He had seen the expression indicating pleasure, then anger, and in his own shrewd way, he waited for the storm to pass before he continued the conversation.

"My boy," Morton said in a mild voice, "don't pay any attention to the fellows who ridicule Lawrence. What if he is a cripple? What if they do call him the Mountain Dwarf? They are jealous; yes, sir, jealous of Ed Lawrence's success. He's a big man and don't you let any one tell you different."

Frank did not answer and Big Jim Morton continued in his soothing way.

"I'm glad you're going to live up our way for the summer. It is a beautiful spot and you'll like it and I'm sure you'll have a good time with your uncle. He'll show you around."

"We're camping on Forest Island alone," Frank informed him, sulkily.

"Alone! Why, I saw Ed Lawrence in the Utica depot yesterday, waiting for the Adirondack Express. He was just getting back from New York.

It seems strange that he didn't wait until to-day and take you to the mountains with him. Well, I suppose he's a busy man."

Frank leaned forward with a start and amazement was clearly stamped upon his face and he made no effort to conceal it.

"You said you saw my uncle in the Utica depot yesterday? I thought he was on his way west, going to Alaska! Why——"

Frank was so surprised that he could not continue speaking. He gazed mutely at George, but his companion was paying no attention to him, because his eyes were on Jim Morton, eagerly studying the fat man's countenance. Whatever there was about this person that George did not like, it was growing stronger the longer he watched him. George caught Frank's eye for an instant but the warning he scowled to his friend went unheeded.

Jim Morton's fat hand was gently caressing one flabby cheek, as he examined the boy before him. He knew that Frank was surprised at his information and this seemed to give him a great amount of satisfaction that he could not entirely conceal.

"How strange!" he said. "Your uncle told you he would go to Alaska, and I saw him going north yesterday? Now, why should he tell you that?"

"He didn't tell me," Frank said, still more sullenly. "I've never met my uncle; I never saw him; and I don't care if I never do!"

A sharp kick on the leg brought Frank to his senses, and he fell silent. Big Jim Morton leaned toward him and his sharp eyes shone with a light

of triumph. He patted Frank's shoulder, but before he could speak, a man walked up the aisle and stood near the seat.

"Well, here you are! I looked all through the train for you."

The three looked up and the boys recognized the newcomer. He was the man they had seen talking to Morton in the Utica depot. One could not easily forget him, because his manner and appearance were impressed upon one after the first careful glance. He was tall and thin, with dark hair and dark skin and black, beady eyes that bored one through and through. As he looked down at the boys, a smile curled his lips, showing two rows of solid white teeth.

"Sit down, Don, sit down," Jim Morton cried, motioning his companion to the vacant place beside Frank. "Meet Frank Lawrence, nephew of our own Ed, King of the North. This other chap is his friend—ahem, I've forgotten the name."

"George Harvey."

"Yes, yes, George Harvey," Big Jim repeated.

"Glad to know the boys," Don said, smiling, his sharp glance roving from one to the other.

"The boys will visit Ed Lawrence's summer place on Forest Island," Morton informed his friend. "They expect to remain until autumn. Sit down, Don, sit down."

"No, I think I'll go into the smoker."

"Wait, I'll go with you," Jim said. "Boys, I bid you good day, until we meet again." He shook hands with them, patted them on the heads, assured them of his eternal friendship, and followed

Don down the aisle into the smoker. As his big bulk disappeared through the door, the boys gazed at each other in silence. Finally George uttered an exclamation of irritation and disgust.

"Well, what do you think of that!"

Anger lurked in Frank's eyes and a sullen frown darkened his face. He gazed through the window at the forest that crowded close to the track, for the train had left McKeever and was plunging into the north. Jim Morton's words had stirred the depths of his dislike, and he had a difficult struggle to keep the promise he had made Mr. David and Brother Alpheus. He knew it was his job to crush down all thoughts and feelings against his uncle, and to withhold his judgment and wait for the future to decide. George realized this and waited patiently for the storm to pass before he spoke.

"Well," he said, grinning at Frank good-naturedly, "what do you think of 'Fat' and 'Slim'?"

Frank turned his troubled face toward his friend.

"Did you hear what he said about my uncle?"

"Yes, I did," George answered with spirit; "but I don't believe a word he said. I don't like those men. There is something about them that makes me shiver."

"Jim Morton was very friendly. He gave us that information naturally enough."

"Very true," George answered, "but why did he pick us out. He must have been watching us and listening to our conversation. He had a reason for coming to us."

"What reason could he have for telling us that

my uncle took a train out of Utica yesterday? Why should he lie about my uncle, if he is not in Tamarack?"

"There must be some reason," George argued. "Didn't Mr. David say that Edward Lawrence was on his way to Alaska? Why should your guardian lie to you? Do you believe Jim Morton in preference to Mr. David?"

"Perhaps my uncle lied to Mr. David. I believe John David all right, but perhaps he's being fooled too."

"Maybe, maybe," George said quickly. "Quite a lawyer, this Mr. David. Your uncle could tell him something about an Alaskan trip and then slip back to the mountains to enjoy himself. Reasonable, isn't it? No, I'd sooner bet there's something wrong with those two men."

"Figure it out to suit yourself. If my uncle is such a smart one, how do you know what kind of a scheme he's working out? What if Morton's in league with him?"

"No, no," George said. "If he was, he would not give you a clue about your uncle's return. No, there's some other reason."

"All right, Sherlock Holmes," Frank said, smiling wanly, "you figure it out; I give it up."

Both boys lapsed into silence and watched the trees and clear spaces rush by the car windows. From a station called Thendara, they climbed steadily upward, through deep woods, past flashing streams of clear sparkling water, along the shores of crystal lakes, on and up until the world seemed covered by nothing but endless forests, towering

mountains, with here and there, bright watery jewels that danced in the sunshine or reflected the dark shadows of the trees.

The gloom cast by the visit of Morton and Don could not last long, however, and once more their interest was all alive to the beauties and wonders around them. Past Big Moose, where they secured their first expansive view of mountains piled on mountains; past Tupper Lake Junction and on once more into the north. The sun was swinging down the western ways, when the train rushed into Lake Clear Junction and the two travel-stained, weary boys gathered their bags and left the coach. They found the train that went to Tamarack and when the baggage had been transferred, the Tamarack train drew out of the station and puffed over the mountains toward the east.

A greater surprise was in store for the adventurers when they left their coach at Tamarack and viewed the excitement and activity at the railroad station. Men and women poured out of the train and were greeted by a small army of taxi- and cab-drivers. Lined up against the platform was a long row of automobiles and carriages of every description from the modern up-to-the-minute machine to the old-fashioned, horse-drawn barouche. The dress of the people resembled the vehicles, in that they represented the latest styles from the city and the coarse-booted, coarse-shirted trappings of the lumberjack.

Standing on the platform of the station, the boys viewed this activity with eager interest. As the autos and carriages whirled away with their pas-

sengers and the crowd around the depot grew smaller, the boys started to search for a man answering the description Mr. David had given them of the Indian guide.

"Are you boys looking for Peter Tahawus?"

They turned quickly at the sound of this voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Going to Mr. Lawrence's camp on Forest Island?"

"Yes. Are you Peter Tahawus?"

"Yes, I'm Mr. Lawrence's guide."

"My name is Frank Lawrence, and my friend is George Harvey."

"All right, come with me."

The boys exchanged quick glances as they gathered their bags and followed the Indian. They were somewhat disappointed in the Indian guide, because he did not talk as they had expected. His speech was precise and correct, very much so, in fact, although his manner was gruff and not altogether friendly. If his mode of speech was disappointing, however, — lacking in grunts and "ugh's,"—his appearance met their expectations. He wore a wide slouch hat, a gray flannel shirt and no coat; a pair of soiled khaki pants tucked into high leather boots completed his outfit. He stalked ahead, tall and straight and proud and bore himself like a monarch of the mountains. He stopped beside a buckboard, to which two horses were hitched, and he took the boys' baggage and piled it on the wagon.

"Sit in the back seat."

With this short invitation, the Indian climbed

upon the rig and took up the reins. The horses sped past the depot, turned sharply to the right and the boys found themselves in the village. The horses' hoofs rang sharply on the brick pavement and the boys' eager glances took in the modern hotels that graced opposite corners. They proceeded one block, when Peter Tahawus turned again to the right and passed out of the business section of the village. Once more the Indian directed the horses, this time to the left on to a long, white road that swept down one hill, over another and was lost in the depths of the woods.

"Are we still in the village of Tamarack?" asked George, leaning forward and speaking for the first time.

"Yes," the Indian grunted. "The village ends on the lake shore. Turn around and you will get a good view of the place."

The boys looked back and saw a part of Tamarack nestling in a valley and surrounded by towering mountains. Below were the railroad track, the station, sawmills and warehouses. The houses in this section were scattered haphazard, and were built in many queer places; some clinging to the side of a mountain and others squatting on the flats.

"You see the worst part of the village," the Indian informed them. "The other end is the best part. You will see it all some day."

The guide drew the horses to a walk, as they climbed the second hill. With the same eager curiosity the boys' glances roved everywhere. On all sides were mountains whose peaks towered into

the purple-tinted glow that surrounded them. In the west the sun was slowly dropping into a sea of molten gold. A thin purple haze floated up from the valley and crept up the mountains and then leaped from peak to peak, until earth and sky were tinted with this same gorgeous color. The beauty of it silenced even the boys and they sat quiet, scarcely believing their eyes and hardly crediting their good fortune.

They were aroused by a word from the Indian. They gazed in the direction he pointed and saw on the brow of a hill a church and a house next to it.

"You can go to that church on Sunday. Our Lady of the Snows, it is called, and Father Campion is the priest. He lives in that house near the woods."

The boys caught a glimpse of church and house and that was all, because the Indian spoke to the horses and sent them galloping down the hill. They plunged into the woods, and swept out into an open space on the shore of the lake.

"The lake!" cried George, when he saw the blue, glimmering sheet of water stretching away between the wooded mountains.

"This is the Lake-of-the-Clustered-Stars," the Indian informed them. "Mr. Lawrence's camp is on Forest Island, in the middle of this lake."

Before they could examine the lake closely, the horses rushed forward and plunged again into the deep wood. There was no sunshine here, for the darkness of night was marching out of the deep woods and the air was cold and penetrating.

A sharp, pungent, exhilarating odor of pine and balsam crept from the forest, and tingled in the boys' nostrils and sank deep into their lungs.

"Oh, the woods, the real woods, the wild woods," George cried, raising his head like a charger and sniffing the air.

"It is wonderful; and did you notice how cold it's getting? I'm chilly."

The boys drew on their coats, for the air grew colder as they went deeper into the woods. As they sped on, they noticed a number of signs nailed to the trees. The guide told them that the land was owned by Edward Lawrence, and those placards warned every one concerned that no fishing or hunting was allowed. While the boys commented on this, the Indian turned his horses to the left and sent them running down a grade that returned to the lake.

"This is a private road and it also belongs to Mr. Lawrence. It leads to my camp. This is the way Mr. Lawrence goes to and from Forest Island. Here we are now."

The horses swung out of the woods and raced across a clearing on the shore of the lake. With a sharp word of command, the Indian drew them up in front of a well-built log house that stood about one hundred feet from the water. On the shore directly in front of the camp was a boat-house and dock, and back toward the woods was the barn and ice house.

"This is my camp," the Indian informed them, pronouncing every syllable. "Jump out and take

your baggage into the house. I will be back in a few minutes, after I tend the horses."

Frank and George carried their baggage into a long living room that ran the full length of the house. They made their way to the kitchen and found running water. They didn't wait for an invitation to wash up and they had scarcely finished when the Indian returned from the barn. He grunted good-naturedly when he saw the boys taking care of themselves without any special instructions from him.

"I shall have supper for you soon. You will get your own meals after this."

The Indian stirred up the fire in the stove and in a short time he had an appetizing supper of bacon, eggs, coffee, bread and butter. The boys ate heartily and when they had finished, Peter gathered up their baggage and started toward the dock.

"We will go to Forest Island right away. I want you to see the camp before dark."

The sun had disappeared behind the western horizon and darkness was descending on the earth. A curtain of deep purple shrouded the mountains and overshadowed the lake. A few swallows flitted over the bosom of the water and from the woods that lined the shore, there arose a harsh chorus from the crows. A hush had fallen on the earth, and the silence was relieved only by a few voices.

The Indian piled their luggage into a guide boat, and when the boys clambered aboard, he rowed toward the island. It was a quarter of a mile from shore, but Peter covered the distance very quickly.

Darkness was closing in rapidly when they landed at a dock in the rear of the lodge and made their way indoors through the kitchen. The Indian found a lamp, lit it and led the boys upstairs.

"You boys are tired and I know you want to go to bed. You can sleep on the porch; it is cooler and you will like it better. I will show you around in the morning."

The tired boys followed him upstairs and out upon a sleeping porch that faced the southwest.

"You can undress in the bedroom," he said, placing the lamp upon a table. "I hope you sleep well. I will see you in the morning. Good night."

The boys bade him good night and he left the room.

"Well, what do you think about it now?" George asked sleepily.

"I'm too tired and too puzzled to think," Frank admitted. "I'll tell you about it in the morning."

They jumped into bed and were soon sleeping peacefully. Then came the wild, weird cries on the lake and island that had awakened George and their adventure of the first night on Forest Island had begun. But even ghostly nights run their course and day comes again.

IV

THE LODGE ON FOREST ISLAND

THE sun swung high in the blue heavens and clear-throated bird songs filled the air. A catbird poured out his liquid notes and from the deep woods came the sharp, distinct call of the white-throated sparrow. In a near-by pine grove, a number of squirrels scampered about and chattered vigorously, scolding one another like a family of quarreling people. From a lofty perch, a pine finch watched them suspiciously, and looked with disfavor upon their bickering.

On the lake shore, in front of the lodge, a boat lay upon the sand and close by stood Peter Tahawus, the Indian guide. For a long time he remained motionless; then slowly, with head bent and eyes upon the ground, he walked between the boathouse and the lookout tower and carefully examined the ground. He entered the boathouse, emerged and walked around it, examining the ground in every direction. He returned to the boat and stood watching the sleeping porch. He could discover, however, no signs of life, in that direction. Satisfied with his search, the Indian pushed the boat into the water and rowed around the island, making for the camp on the mainland.

On the upper porch the two tired boys slept

heavily, for their journey of the previous day and their night's wakefulness had exhausted them. They did not hear the birds and squirrels in the pine grove; they did not hear the Indian walking on the beach; nor did the bright light of day disturb them. It was Frank who awoke first, and as he opened his eyes and gazed at the patch of blue sky visible between the trees, he wondered where he was. A sharp pain shooting through his back brought him to his senses and the last haze of drowsiness fled from his brain. He gazed around and found himself propped against the head of his bed and his aching back and stiff muscles told him he had slept in that position, probably for several hours. He sat up in bed and stretched his cramped body and as he looked around, he caught sight of George breathing quietly in sleep. Beyond the posts were the tower, a boathouse, the woods, the lake, and he realized fully where he was and what had happened during the night. He mused upon these events until a startled cry caused him to jump and look around in alarm.

"Waack! Waack! Waack! Waack!"

"Frank, what's that?"

George sat up in bed, a surprised look upon his face. He gazed around like one in a daze, not knowing where he was or what had happened. A shout of laughter from Frank, however, thoroughly aroused him and he grinned at his companion.

"There's the villain who made the noise," Frank cried, pointing at a bird swinging on the

limb of a tree near the porch. "He scared me too, with his crazy racket."

With head perked on one side and body tilted slightly forward, a saucy blue-jay peered at them in surprise and curiosity. He waacked out his harsh cry and then shot through the air, out across the lake, scolding as he went.

"Well, sir," George said, yawning, "this is the 'island-of-dreadful-sounds,' I'll say. After last night's adventure, I'm ready to have hysterics if I hear a pin drop."

"No one would ever think it if they saw you sleeping. Nothing was troubling you," Frank reassured him.

"Didn't you sleep, Frankie?"

"Yes, after a long time. Then I fell asleep sitting against the head of the bed."

"That was a crazy thing to do," George said, giving another good yawn.

"I know it, but when you fell asleep last night, or rather early this morning, after we heard those noises, I just sat against the head of the bed and went over this whole crazy affair. Thought of everything from the time Mr. David proposed this scheme—I wanted to figure out what it's all headed for."

"Well, have you got the answer?"

"I always come back to the same solution. I can't make anything out of it unless my uncle is here and intends to scare us and drive us home. A nice, loving uncle he is," Frank muttered, bitterly.

"Say," George cried, "if dear Uncle Ed thinks

he can drive us home, he has another thought coming. We'll show him a trick he never saw before."

He shook his finger at Frank, and to drive his argument home, he hurled his pillow at his friend and it found its mark. Before Frank could return the compliment, George leaped out of bed and sprang into the bedroom, shouting as he went: "Come along! It's 'steen o'clock!"

The two boys wasted little time dressing. They were even too hungry to stop and examine the wonderful things they saw on the way to the kitchen. Down the broad stairway, in the halls, library and dining room, everywhere they looked, they saw specimens of the great woods, flowers, insects, minerals, stuffed animals, fish. But a glance had to suffice for the time being.

The kitchen proved much more interesting just now, for it contained everything a hungry boy could desire. It was bright and cheerful, lighted by four large windows, and through these one could look out across the lake to the north and west. A door led to a large porch that faced the west and in the upper part of the door was a pane of glass. On one side of the kitchen was a cook stove in which wood or coal could be burned. In a corner was an oil stove and between the two stoves were boxes filled with wood and coal. The pantry was apparently stocked with all conceivable articles of food—it was a regular grocery store.

With shouts of joy, the boys lit the fire and prepared a breakfast of bacon, eggs, coffee, cream, bread and butter. To show how much they ap-

preciated the well-stocked larder, they opened two cans of peaches and finished their combination breakfast and dinner with peaches and cream, and a variety of cakes and cookies. Then, having made such a good start, they cleared the table, and washed the dishes.

"We certainly have everything handy, except servants to wait on us," George said, surveying the kitchen.

"Huh, you will find no servants here."

Both boys turned quickly, startled by the sound of a human voice. Peter Tahawus stood in the doorway that led into the hall, his black eyes twinkling with good humor and a faint smile upon his dusky face. He saw the surprised expression on their countenances and he was amused, knowing the reason.

"I am glad that you found the food and that you got your own breakfast. Mr. Lawrence will like that, because he wants you to take care of yourselves."

The boys grinned sheepishly when they realized how nervous their night's experience had made them. The Indian's silent approach and the sound of his voice had frightened them, and they knew that Peter Tahawus understood. Their quick exchange of glances was not lost upon the Indian.

"My uncle left a well-stocked kitchen for us," Frank said, slowly regaining his composure. "I hope we'll please him by getting our own meals and taking care of ourselves. How will my uncle know all these things, Mr. Tahawus?"

"That's the first time any one has called me

Mr. Tahawus," the Indian said, smiling broadly. "Usually people call me Pete or Adirondack Pete. You boys had better do the same."

The smile left his face and he looked at the boys gravely.

"You ask me how your uncle will know all these things. Well, if you stay here he is sure you will get your own meals. Besides, I may make a report to him that you are living up to rules."

"That's the way you will do it," George said. "Well, you'll find out that we can manage when we get acquainted with this island and its inhabitants."

Pete gazed at him sharply, but the boy's face was blank with innocence.

"By the way, Pete," Frank asked, "where is my uncle now?"

"It is hard to tell where he is at present. He comes and goes like the clouds in the sky, and he tells no man."

"If you don't know where he is, how will you send him a report about us?" Frank persisted.

Just a flicker of irritation showed in the Indian's eyes, at the boy's persistent questions.

"I can send my report to Mr. David or to Jim Purcell, who is Mr. Lawrence's secretary. One or the other will know where to send your uncle's mail."

"I suppose you know where he is this time. Mr. David said he went to Alaska."

"Yes, he said he would stop in Alaska."

"I am puzzled," Frank confessed, a frown wrinkling his forehead. "We met a fellow on the

train who said his name was Big Jim Morton. He told us he saw my uncle in Utica yesterday, waiting to take the Adirondack Express to Tamarack. Do you know Big Jim Morton?"

"He is in Tamarack a good deal. I think he buys and sells lumber and many other things."

"Do you think he really saw my uncle at Utica?"

"Maybe he did," Pete said, quietly. "Your uncle is a strange man and maybe he changed his mind about the trip west. If Morton saw him, it must be true. He is a friend of Mr. Lawrence."

The Indian drew out his watch and examined it.

"You boys slept late. I suppose you were tired after your trip. Adirondack air makes you very hungry and sleepy for the first few days."

At this point George, who had been keeping a sharp eye on the Indian all through Frank's conversation, interrupted. "We were awake a long time last night," he said slowly. "What sort of birds and animals have you around here? Early this morning we heard the queerest noises—just before daylight."

Pete looked at the speaker and George caught the flash in his dark eyes.

"What kind of noises?" he asked, perfectly calmly.

George gave an imitation of the cries that disturbed them. The Indian smiled at his attempt and told him that the first was an owl and the second, a water bird, called a loon.

"There are many hoot-owls around here. Don't pay any attention to them. If you do, you will not get any sleep. These birds hunt their food at

night, and sometimes they like to make a lot of noise. The loon is a water bird and calls at night, especially when the moon is shining. There are a number of loons around these lakes."

"The bird cries did not scare me as much as the lights and the tramping of feet on the shore," Frank said. "Who were those people, Pete, and what were they doing around here at that time of the night?"

George wasn't quite certain whether Pete's face showed surprise or anger as he looked from one to the other. He felt sure, however, that the Indian was pretty much disturbed or his face wouldn't have shown any sign.

"You heard people on the beach and saw lights? Perhaps they were fish pirates setting night-lines or nets. Perhaps they were campers from the south shore, who were lost coming back from Tamarack," Pete said, in a calm, even tone. "Were you boys afraid?"

"Well, everything was new to us, you know. We won't let bird-calls scare us again," George assured him.

"Good," the Indian grunted. "Now, before we do anything else," he continued, "we've got to examine the house and island. I must show you how to get around."

The guide opened a door that led into a dining room. The bright June sunshine pouring through three large windows made the room look cheerful and inviting. The ceiling and walls were paneled in oak and the door jambs and window sills were of red birch. On the walls hung pictures—water

colors and oil paintings—most of them representing birds and animals of the Adirondacks, with here and there a beautiful mountain scene of woods, stream, or waterfall. A number of glass cabinets displayed specimens of the various fish found in the mountain waters. The boys' fancy was particularly captured by gaudily decorated rainbow trout.

"O Pete, will we catch any like that?" George asked, pointing to a five-pound beauty of graceful length.

"Some day I will take you where these fellows are caught."

A double doorway led into the large living room, that was equally bright and even more attractive than the dining room. In one end was an open fireplace made of native rocks. Its great, black, yawning mouth was large enough to hold an immense pile of logs. Guns and fishing tackle of every description hung around the fireplace and here, too, were three fine mounted heads—a moose, a reindeer, and an elk. All the walls showed specimens of birds, animals, snakes, and in cabinets there were butterflies, moths, bugs and insects. A stuffed black bear, as natural as life, leered at them from a corner and a lynx and a wild cat snarled at them from the top of a bookcase. Lucky they had Pete to tell them the names of some of these birds and animals, for they had to admit their ignorance more than once.

The doorway into the hall was guarded by two large pillars, made from white birch trees with the bark still on them. On these were mounted stuffed

birds, shown in natural poses. Near the top of one sat a large snow owl, and below him was a downy woodpecker clinging to the bark and in the act of drilling for grubs. At the foot of the other pillar was a woodchuck, looking quite amazed at the antics of a porcupine who was climbing the tree. Above these were two squirrels disputing over the right of way.

The boys went from one interesting exhibit to another and they scarcely spoke a word in answer to Pete's short statements, so rapt was their attention. The Indian took them up a broad flight of stairs into a hall that ran the full length of the second floor and opened into bedrooms and baths on both sides. Except for the profusion of stuffed birds and animals, the house certainly was more like a city mansion than an island camp and the boys laughed together at their own first idea of rough, wild living. They went out of the house, across the porch and standing upon the lawn, looked back at the lodge. The lower part was built of rock, and the upper of wood. A large porch adorned three sides, south, east and west, and commanded a wide view of the glimmering lake.

"A camp," George said, grinning.

"Yes, I always thought that meant a log shack in the woods."

"We have log shacks, hunting and fishing shacks, back in the deep woods. This is Mr. Lawrence's own camp," Pete said in a tone which implied that now he had explained everything.

Pete led them along the beach toward the boathouse. Almost directly in front of them, the boys

saw the lookout tower, a large, circular tower built of rocks. On top of it was a large platform, protected by a roof, but this was boarded up as were all the windows.

"Mr. Lawrence had that built," Pete informed them. "From the top you can see the farthest mountains of the Adirondacks. It is closed now and no one is allowed inside."

"Does any one live in there now?" George asked, taking hold of the knob and trying the door. The Indian stopped in his tracks, and his black eyes snapped.

"It is closed and no one is allowed inside," he repeated slowly.

"Oh," George said, pretending innocence, "I thought maybe some caretaker lived here, but no one was allowed to visit him—or something like that," he ended lamely.

The Indian drew himself up and raised his head proudly. It was clear that anger burned in his eyes.

"I speak the truth! Do you question——"

"Ah now, Pete," George interrupted, startled at this sudden outburst. "I didn't think anything like that! I was wondering about those people—last night—I thought——"

"We will talk about it no more," Pete said, with finality. He turned on his heel and stalked down the beach toward the boathouse. The boys followed, walking slowly and watching the retreating Indian.

"You hurt his feeling with your Sherlock

Holmes questions," Frank said. "I often heard these Indians are queer fellows."

"Maybe so," George answered, "but I'm looking for information. He acted just like a white man who knows more about things than he cares to admit. I'll bet he knows something about that dwarf."

"Well, we'd better be careful for a while, just the same."

"You're right there. Let's catch him and calm his anger."

They met the Indian at the boathouse, and George held out his hand.

"Pete, I'm sorry. Let's shake hands. I won't do it again."

The Indian shook George's hand so solemnly that Frank was almost frightened. It was a relief to have Pete turn to the boathouse, unlock it and usher them in. He handed a bunch of keys to Frank.

"Here are the keys to the lodge and boathouse," Pete told him, adding what each key would unlock.

The boathouse occupied their attention for some time, for they found it a large structure, built of stone. It was situated upon the edge of the lake and extended out over the water. Along the walls were wide shelves, and arranged on these, bottoms up, were a number of canoes, two large rowboats and several thin, light guide boats. Floating on the water was a light motor launch, which, Pete explained, was built to navigate the small streams and rivers, and here, too, rode a long racing launch.

"This is the *Dragon-Fly,*" said Pete, pointing to the high-powered motor boat. "It is the fastest boat in these parts. You can run an engine? Come, we will go around the lake now, and I will show you where to fish and how to get to the other lakes. There are three lakes, and two of them are connected by the Tamarack River. A small brook connects the Middle and Upper Lakes, but it is not large enough for a boat to navigate; not even a rowboat.

"Why not go fishing this afternoon for a little while?" the Indian continued, taking down some tackle from the racks on the walls. He didn't have to wait for the boys' assent. "I can take you down the river. It is not the best time of the day to fish, but the pickerel are running, and you will get something. I must tend to some business for a while."

Pete pulled a guide boat from the shelf; hooked it to a davit, swung it around and lowered it into the water. Seizing a crank that projected from the wall, he turned it, and the door of the boathouse leading into the lake, was lifted from the surface of the water. It slid upwards toward the ceiling and disappeared from view. Pushing the *Dragon-Fly* into the lake, Pete lashed the guide boat to the stern of the launch, allowing only the rear of the guide boat to touch the water. The boys clambered aboard with their fishing tackle, and with a whirr of motor the *Dragon-Fly* dashed out across the lake.

V

MORE DISCOVERIES

GUIDED by the Indian, the motor boat dashed over the blue surface of the lake and sped toward the southwest. An invigorating breeze swept into their faces and they breathed the fresh, clean air deep into their lungs. The warm June sun beat upon them and the bosom of the lake mirrored a few fleecy clouds that floated lazily across the heavens. They sped past little islands that raised their heads timidly above the water, and they circled the larger ones with a rapidity that was startling. Close to the mainland they drew and the boys saw many beautiful summer homes lining the shore.

It did not take them long to circle the lake and make a rapid survey of their surroundings. As they completed the circuit and made toward the south shore, Pete pointed to a large red-and-white buoy bobbing in the water.

"A small river begins there," he said, "and runs into Round Pond. We will make that trip some other day and if I cannot go with you, I'll let you find the way alone. Round Pond is a good place to catch pickerel." Pete swung the boat and pointed east, skirting the southern shore of the lake. He slowed the speed of the boat as he came near the mouth of the river and they wound slowly down

the narrow channel. They passed through this and drew into an expanse of water where the river widened gradually, and here Pete shut off the motor and the boat drifted to the shore. Catching the boat hook in the root of a tree, he drew the *Dragon-Fly* alongside and leaped ashore, carrying the painter with him.

"You boys can fish in this bay. Stay close to the shore and row among the stumps. You will find plenty of pickerel here, and you need not go any farther."

Pete unlashed the guide boat and taking a pair of oars from the launch, handed them to George.

"Aren't you going to stay with us and fish?" Frank asked, as Pete sprang aboard the *Dragon-Fly*.

"No, I must let you fish alone. I must take this boat and go down the river a short way to see some friends who are camping around the bend near Cold Brook. You boys stay here until I come back and do not go into the woods, because you will get lost."

After these instructions, Pete pushed the boat into the channel, started the motor and chugged down the river. The boys boarded the guide boat and George took the oars. He rowed a short distance from shore and made for the tree stumps that he saw jutting above the water.

"I wonder what's in the wind," Frank remarked, playing out the line.

"My, but you're suspicious! Perhaps Pete's calling on those fish pirates," George said, rowing slowly in and out among the stumps.

"Do you believe Pete's solution of last night's mystery?" Frank asked.

"No, I don't. Do owls swim or perch upon the water?"

"I never heard that they did."

"Neither did I, but the so-called owl we heard last night was out on the lake. The cry came directly from the south and there is nothing in that direction but water. The south shore seems a mile from Forest Island."

"Perhaps an owl hoots while flying."

"Maybe, but owls do not carry flash lights."

A sudden splash in the water interrupted their conversation, and both cried out, startled, "What's that?"

An animal was swimming toward the shore, with only head and tail visible above the water. It slid upon the bank with a rush, and disappeared among the bushes. The boys laughed heartily, when they saw what had scared them.

"A muskrat."

"No, a beaver. Didn't you see the shape of its tail?"

Frank did not answer, but turned and started to haul in his line.

"What's the matter?" George called.

"A strike."

"Are you sure? Maybe your line is caught in a stump."

"No, it's coming. Look!"

Far back of the boat, a large grayish-white body leaped out of the water, then plunged forward with a great splash.

"Hold him under and don't give him a loose line. I'll row into the channel," George cried.

They played the fish in the channel and Frank drew him alongside the boat. With a quick jerk of the line he tossed the fish in and struck him a heavy blow on the head.

"A pickerel and I bet it weighs nearly six pounds," Frank shouted, exhibiting his prize.

"We never caught any as big as that near Hercules. We'll send one of those big fellows home to the folks."

"Let's try Round Pond the first chance and if we get a large one, we'll get Pete to pack it and we'll ship it home."

Up and down, in and out among the stumps these energetic fishermen trolled the waters of the little bay, but they had no further success. They had two strikes, but failed to land their prey. It was getting late and since the fish refused to be caught, Frank hauled in his line and George rested on his oars.

"It's about time you called a halt," George grunted. "I'm tired rowing and I'm thirsty. Let's go to that shady spot and rest. We may find a spring."

"Pete told us to stay here. What if he comes back and finds us gone?"

"We can see him first, when he comes up the river."

George turned the boat and rowing downstream, made for the opposite shore. A point of land jutted into the water at the bend in the river. This knoll was covered with a clump of pines and its

cool shade was inviting. George grounded the boat and they dragged it upon the shore. They tied it to a tree and climbed the bank that led to the grove.

Standing on this point and concealed by the trees, the boys had a clear view up and down the river. A short distance downstream, a bridge spanned the stream. They could see the road that approached it on both banks and decided that this was the main highway between Tamarack and Tupper Lake. From the neck of land on which they were standing, the river bent in a long, graceful curve, until it was lost to view amid a sweep of rocks and trees. Upstream the river was narrower and they could see how it snaked its way from the lake through a marsh into its main channel.

"That's all very pretty, but I'm more thirsty than tired," George declared. "I propose that we hunt for a spring."

Frank agreed and they walked along the edge of the woods, keeping the river in sight. They had walked but a short distance, when George halted and raised his hand. They listened and heard the noise of tumbling water. A few yards farther, between the pine woods and the bridge, they came upon a small stream that ran from the deep woods and leaped into the river over a rocky ledge.

"There it is, a brook. Let's follow it into the woods and I'll bet we find a spring."

"If we go too far, we'll miss Pete."

"Don't worry about that Indian. He'll wait for us."

They followed the bank of the brook through the clump of pines; on into the deep woods that ran far back from the river. They walked slowly and their footfalls made no sound, except when they stepped upon a limb of a tree, lying dry and dead upon the ground. Chipmunks scurried from them, squirrels scolded them for daring to trespass on their domain, and a woodpecker stopped his drumming and watched them with head tilted and turned to one side. As the boys continued their search, they kept close to the brook and had walked maybe a quarter of a mile, when a sharp cry overhead brought them both to a standstill. In the startled instant that followed, every forest bird and animal seemed to share, for there was not the slightest rustle of sound to break the silence. And then, before either boy could move or speak, there came, quivering but clear on a tiny breeze, the sharp notes of a human voice—"Oh, I say!"

If the boys had been startled before, they were downright frightened now. Frank caught his breath with a gasp, but George held up a warning finger and beckoned the other to follow him. With all of the caution of jungle tigers, they picked their steps in the direction of that cry. As they paused in their tracks, they caught a high-pitched murmur of voices. George pointed to a large tree some little distance ahead and Frank cautiously made to its shelter. Then George crept along from pine to pine, until he, too, was stationed near the edge of the clearing on the other side of which the suspicious party was being held.

"I tell you, Pete, we can't have those kids hang-

ing around the island all summer, that's all there's to it. You've got to get rid of 'em."

Sharply and distinctly the words struck their ears. Pete in this meeting! Lucky for them that they had found him before he had suspected their presence and got on his guard. They stared at each other and scarcely dared breathe. Then Frank sank slowly to the ground and crouched close behind a clump of blueberry bushes. Gently parting the limbs, he peered across the clearing, and saw the group of speakers. There were three men and they stood in front of a weather-beaten log shack on the opposite side of the brook. When Frank recognized them, his amazement almost toppled him over. George could see that something startling had revealed itself. For sure enough, the men were Pete Tahawus, Big Jim Morton and the dark-faced Don!

"You do as we say, Pete," they heard Don cry in an angry tone.

"You're getting good all of a sudden, aren't you? You're in this thing now and you've got to stick."

"I'll stick, all right," Pete answered in a gruff voice. "I want money, but I won't hurt those boys."

"Now, Pete, go easy. We're not asking you to hurt any one," Jim Morton said, patting the Indian on the back. "This is our big summer and we must get them out of here some way. Just make 'em sick of their adventure."

"Sure, get them out of here," Don said sharply.

"They'll be better off with their mamas. We don't want those babies on our hands."

"Don is right," Morton said. "No one must interfere with our plans. That big consignment must go through quickly."

"Huh, better not talk so loud," Pete warned them. "Never can tell who is listening."

Their voices dropped to a murmur, and from George's position it seemed that the men had withdrawn. Realizing that he and Frank must get back to their boat before Pete missed them, he signaled Frank to commence the retreat and although they could not catch a sound of their enemy, they moved with the utmost caution. They crawled to a safe distance, and getting to their feet, picked their steps gently over the duff. They retraced their way in silence and did not halt until they had reached the pine grove. George gazed long and earnestly into Frank's face.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he asked, his eyes wide with surprise. "They mean us, all right, and they mean to scare us out of the mountains—but who are they?"

"Our friend Big Jim Morton!" Frank exclaimed, "and Don! the man who would show us the Adirondacks!"

"Yes; he'll show us how to get out of the Adirondacks and he'll help us go. Wasn't I right in my suspicions? Now do you believe all he told us?" George demanded.

Frank shook his head slowly. "It's all got me. My brain is surely in a whirl. I'd never make a cool detective," he answered. "We needn't be-

lieve what they say, but we've got to believe what we see," Frank continued, stopping abruptly in front of George. "Jim Morton said my uncle was here in the mountains now, and we have proof that he is here, because we saw him this morning standing on that rock near the tower. Can you get around that?"

George ran his fingers through his hair and gazed intently at the ground. He shook his head slowly, and hard pushed not to agree with Frank, he blurted out, "Well, we saw a dwarf all right, if that's your Uncle Ed."

"Everything points in that direction," Frank declared, speaking rapidly and vehemently. "Uncle Ed wanted us here to prove that we are not sissies. He told Mr. David he would go west, then he slipped back to the mountains and here he is to give us a scare. Others saw him and we saw him, and that's proof enough. I'm sick of the affair and I feel like throwing it up and going home."

"No, no, Frank, don't say that," his friend cried. "We haven't enough proof yet to lynch your uncle! You're letting your dislike run away with you. Wait and we'll get to the bottom of this affair and find out more about it. We won't judge until we have all the evidence. And gee, we've got some fun ahead!"

"Now, here's another thing," George continued, following up his advantage. "Why should your uncle lie to Mr. David? If he told Mr. David about that western trip and it was really a lie, he wanted us to believe it, too. If he wanted us to

think he went west, why did he show himself to us this morning? That's a crazy way of doing things. Edward Lawrence, the 'King of the North Country', is too clever to act like that."

George's reasoning evidently impressed Frank. He had nothing to say for several minutes and when he spoke again, it was in quite a different tone.

"There's a great deal in what you say," he confessed. "We'll wait and see what develops. I know I'm too ready to jump on Uncle Ed. But there is some scheme on foot, and these men think we'll stand in their way. I wonder what they'll do next?"

"It's up to us to go about and pretend we didn't hear or see anything. We'll let Pete think we've forgotten about those night-prowlers. I'm ready to bet now that Morton and Don were the men who scared us last night."

"In that case, you get my uncle into the mess again."

"I don't know about that," George said quickly, trying to keep his friend's thoughts away from Edward Lawrence. "There's one thing I do know and it's this, these men won't make us sick of our adventure and they won't drive us home until we unravel this mystery."

"Agreed! I'm with you," said Frank. "Listen, what's that?"

The purring of a motor reached their ears, and as they listened they found that it came from the small bay that indented the bank just below the bridge.

"The *Dragon-Fly*. Come, we'd better row into the stream. We can't let Pete find us here."

The boys ran down the bank and pushed their boat into the water. Rowing swiftly into the channel, they went toward the fishing grounds. They had scarcely entered midstream, when the *Dragon-Fly* rounded the bend and made for the spot where Pete had stopped to unload them on the bank. They joined him and as they drew alongside, he called to them: "Did you catch anything?"

They showed him their prize.

"Good," he grunted. "That is not so bad for the first day out. You will do better the next time."

They boarded the *Dragon-Fly,* and Pete lashed the guide boat to it and this time, with Frank at the engine and Pete to steer, they swept up the river into the lake and made for Forest Island.

VI

A SON OF THE FOREST

IT was four o'clock Tuesday afternoon when Father Campion sought a shady corner of the porch and opened the letter he had just received from the postman. He paid no attention to the postmark on the envelope, but ran the paper cutter under the flap and opened it neatly. When he read the heading and discovered that it was from his friend Brother Alpheus, his attention was arrested and his interest grew.

He finished reading and laid the letter upon his knee, smoothing it with his hand. For the space of a minute he watched the figure of a boy move back and forth across the lawn in front of the church. Then he took up the letter and read it again. He scanned the first pages hurriedly and gave his attention to the last part where Brother Alpheus told him about Frank and George. It was a detailed account of the affair, Mr. Lawrence's request, and the boys' acceptance and trip. The letter urged Father Campion to watch these lads and if they should have too hard a time, to lend a helping hand.

Father Campion folded the letter when he heard footsteps crunching on the pebbly path that led from his house to the church. He watched the boy approach and a troubled expression crept into

his face when he noted the excessively proud bearing of the youth, the body stiffly erect, the head held high, the lips tightly drawn and every movement of the figure proclaiming an attitude of arrogance. It was not assumed, but was a part of the boy's nature, and any one knowing Pete Tahawus, proud Indian guide, would quickly conclude that this youth was his son, for Dick was the image of his father.

"Well, Dick," Father Campion said, motioning the boy to a chair, "what is on your mind? I am afraid you work too steady. Take a day off and go fishing."

"That's what I came to talk about," Dick Tahawus replied, sitting upon the edge of the chair and keeping his body erect. "If I can get off to-morrow, I'll go down to my father's camp."

"By all means, Dick, go any time you wish. Don't feel that you must remain around this house and church all of the time. A day or two on the lake or in the woods will make you feel better."

Father Campion's presence and kind words had the desired effect upon Dick and he relaxed a little in his chair. There was less arrogance in his attitude, and the proud expression on his face was softened. Father Campion was quick to notice these slight changes and they were always a sign of encouragement to him. Dick had been with him for two years, attending school at Tamarack and working about the church and house during his leisure hours. When he came from the Indian Reservation near Nyando he was so bitterly proud and self-sufficient it was almost impossible to keep

him. Under the guidance of Father Campion and the association with boys and girls at school, Dick had yielded to the influences of Christian civilization. Whereas formerly he had stood alone, against all the world and its offered friendship, now he could be made to listen to reason, to render help and accept it at times. He realized how absurd and childish some of his actions were.

Early in spring, Dick's father had come to Tamarack and taken up his abode in Mr. Lawrence's camp on the north shore of the lake. Dick saw his father often and the two were together frequently. Gradually the old spirit of pride and arrogance had crept back into Dick's nature and was reflected in his actions. He was growing sullen and bitter over something he had learned from his father. Pete's return was undoing all the good that Father Campion had accomplished during those two years and this troubled the priest. While the boy was with him, he could influence Dick; but once the young Indian had left his presence, he felt that Pete's words and example were the controlling force. He had not yet solved the mystery and he dared not question young Tahawus because that would only arouse the Indian's suspicions and all his influence would end. Father Campion could do nothing but watch and wait. In the meantime he would continue the battle and try to keep the power he had gained over the boy.

"You will go down to the lake to-morrow?" Father Campion asked.

"Yes, Father."

"I am glad you will go to the camp. While you

are there, tell your father to take you to Forest Island to meet the boys who are staying at the lodge."

Dick drew himself up quickly and he cried out in surprise: "Are the boys there now? My father didn't tell me!"

"They arrived last night. I haven't seen them, but I just learned they were at Forest Lodge."

Father Campion was startled by the expression on the Indian boy's face. Anger and hatred flashed from his eyes and were pictured on his dark, sullen face. He sat upright, head thrown back, his gaze fixed upon the blue water that glimmered through the trees. For a short time Father Campion did not speak, but studied this strange boy before him.

"Did you know these boys were coming?" he asked.

"I heard about them last week. My father told me."

"I understand that they will remain at Forest Lodge all summer. There are two of them," Father Campion continued, "Frank Lawrence and George Harvey. Frank is Edward Lawrence's nephew and will some day get all of Mr. Lawrence's money and property."

Dick made no answer, but sat rigid, his eyes blazing and his fists clenched. Father Campion stroked his chin thoughtfully and continued in a tone even milder than usual.

"Would you like to meet these boys?"

"No, Father, I would not."

"You seem angry over something, Dick. You

should not feel that way about others. It would help you to become acquainted with these fellows."

"I don't want their help. I can get along without them," Dick answered sullenly.

"You don't quite understand me, my boy. I mean you could learn a great deal from them, and you could teach them many things. They have never been in the mountains until this summer, and they are going to live alone on Forest Island and take care of themselves. Your father will not help them, because that is Mr. Lawrence's order. If you called and saw the boys once in a while, their stay would prove less lonely. It you were living alone in a big city, wouldn't you like some one to take you around and show you the points of interest and teach you the ways of the people?"

"Yes, I would," Dick answered unbending a little and growing calmer. "But these boys are supposed to look out for themselves and Mr. Lawrence doesn't want me or any one else around them."

"That isn't in the agreement. He expects the boys to have friends and companions and you are just the one to help them. You see, Frank Lawrence did not care to come here, because he is not very fond of his uncle. But he finally overcame his prejudice and consented."

"Why doesn't he care for his uncle?" Dick asked quickly.

"He thought his uncle had wronged his father. When he found out that this was not true, that

changed matters and he accepted his uncle's scheme."

Father Campion folded the letter and put it in his pocket. He sighed audibly as he watched the effect of his words upon Dick Tahawus. The boy's attitude had changed a little and he seemed more inclined to listen to Father Campion's suggestion. The latter saw this and prepared to push his point.

"The boys are planning on going to college next autumn, and they could help——"

"I wouldn't need any help," Dick cried, leaping to his feet, "if we got——!" He stopped abruptly, when he realized what he was saying. He stood rigid, eyes blazing, body quivering and his fingers clenched tightly. He looked into Father Campion's startled face and when he thought of his words and actions, shame possessed him and he hurried from the porch and ran into the woods that crowded close to the house. Father Campion watched him until his figure was lost in the shelter of the pines. Then he left the porch and entered the house, more disturbed and more troubled than he had been in years.

VII

FRANK WRITES TWO LETTERS

IT was after five o'clock when the *Dragon-Fly* slid into the pool inside the boathouse. Pete had unloaded the boys upon the dock, turned the launch and shoved it into its resting place, with its prow pointing toward the lake. He accompanied the boys to the lodge, and then proceeding to the dock near the ice house, he boarded his guide boat and pulled toward his camp on the north shore.

Left alone at the lodge, the boys prepared their supper. George cleaned and scaled the fish, while Frank started the fire, and put potatoes and carrots on to boil. They were well satisfied with their own ability to cook, it would seem, for they ate a hearty supper that would have made good Mrs. Harvey throw up her hands in despair. The meal finished, the boys washed the dishes, arranged the kitchen and started through the house on an exploring expedition. As they crossed the kitchen, George stopped and reached toward an electric light hanging from the ceiling.

"Up-to-date," he said, snapping the button, "but it doesn't work. I wonder what's the matter."

"The dynamo is broke," came the answer. Both boys jumped and turned swiftly, to find Pete fac-

ing them. The Indian was smiling broadly. He did seem to take great pleasure in startling them.

"Huh," he grunted, "you get scared at every sound you hear?"

George imitated his grin and gave a careless shrug of the shoulders. "It's our first week on an island, you know, but after we get to know the difference between a loon and a ghost, you won't scare us any more."

"Humph!" responded Pete. Then, pointing to the electric bulb, he continued, "We have a power plant of our own, but it is out of order at present. The dynamo is in that stone building in the rear of the lodge."

"We were wondering what was in that building," said Frank.

"I came back to-night to tell you to take a trip with me to-morrow. It will fit in very fine with Mr. Lawrence's plan for you to learn about the woods and to help yourselves."

Something in Pete's manner as well as his words made the boys wonder whether this were really a part of the uncle's plan and George cast a quick, suspicious glance at Frank as they waited for Pete to explain.

"I must go into the woods to-morrow to examine a stand of pine. Mr. Lawrence expects to cut these trees next autumn and I pick out the ones to timber and find a place for a sawmill. It is on Lawrence Lake, away back in the deep woods. If you boys care to go, I will help you to pitch a tent and show you where to get all of the trout you want."

"Yes, Pete, we'll go," George said, making the decision for both of them. "I'd just as soon get a little real wild life before we settle down in this all-modern apartment. Right-o, Frank?"

"Very good," said the Indian quickly. "Mr. Lawrence will not object if you go out on this trip. But I must call you early in the morning. We will start just as soon as the sun comes up. You can get up so early if you go to bed now and have a good sleep."

With that he turned on his heel and stalked down the path toward the boat he had left at the north dock. The boys watched him until he disappeared behind the ice house. Then they looked at each other.

"Well, was that the right move to solve the mystery?" Frank asked.

"I think so. That Indian isn't so sure of things himself and there's something strange about this invitation. But we might as well go with their plans until we know what else to do."

"It isn't any stranger than the other things that have happened to us since we began adventuring. It fits into that notion of getting rid of us," Frank declared.

"You could take it that way. Jim Morton and Don expect a consignment of something and we're in the way. Pete takes us out of the way on this journey. Maybe we should have refused and hung around here to investigate," George suggested. "But," he continued, returning to his first opinion, "if we refused Pete and tried to stay here, the chances are they'd get suspicious and then

we'd never find out anything about them. He's pretty shrewd, you can bet, and it was just luck he didn't catch us this afternoon. If he begins to think we're anything but innocent babies and takes to watching us we won't have the ghost of a chance. Anyhow, we'll learn more about the woods and then all these strange noises won't bother us."

"I think you're right, George. It'll be best to go slow and pretend we don't know that anything is going on. What I'm anxious to settle is the part my uncle is playing in this game. I wish I could get Mr. David on the telephone; I'd ask him a few direct questions."

"You can do the next best thing and that is, write him a letter. Tell him what's happened and ask him for an explanation—if he has one. If he's in on these schemes—well, either he'll make everything look as simple as daylight, or we'll get another shifty explanation, like Pete's."

"That's a good idea, but how about letting Pete mail the letter? He might just open it, you know—especially if there is a real plot," Frank objected.

"We can post it ourselves, at Tamarack."

"What about the answer?" Frank asked. "Pete's the one to bring our mail, you know, and he could keep Mr. David's letter, at least until they have carried out their plans."

"I have an idea," George said. "Come upstairs to our room and I'll think it out on the way. The paper and stuff is up there and be-

sides, we're safer and can talk with no one to pop in on us."

Once locked securely in their room on the second floor, George unfolded his plans.

"Here it is, in a nutshell," he explained, standing close to Frank and speaking in a low voice. "You write two letters to Mr. David. In one letter tell him about our arrival and Pete meeting us, and also mention our trip with Pete to-morrow to Lawrence Lake. Tell him a little about Jim Morton and what he told us and anything else that we've mentioned to Pete. But don't say anything about seeing the dwarf or what we heard in the woods. Give this letter to Pete and ask him to post it.

"Yes, but——."

"Wait," George said, quickly, "wait for the rest of my scheme. You're to write a second letter to Mr. David and in that you can tell him everything we've heard and seen, about the dwarf, and this afternoon, and a full description of Big Jim Morton and Don on the train. Tell him that we're suspicious about this trip with Pete to-morrow and then ask him all the questions you want to, about your uncle and Pete and the rest. We'll get Father Campion to mail it for us. We passed his church—Our Lady of the Snow—on our way to the lake, you know. In that second letter you can tell Mr. David that you are sending two letters, and that he's to send his answer care of Father Campion. He'll understand all right."

"But I don't get the point," Frank declared, still puzzled.

"Gee, that's easy! We want to find out how Pete's in league with these fellows. There's every chance that Pete will read our letter and if Mr. David and your uncle do not know all about this 'consignment' and Jim Morton—he won't even send such an innocent letter just mentioning those fellows and our trip to-morrow. Of course, if the dwarf is your uncle and he is ordering Pete to do these things, especially to take us in the woods to-morrow, and if Mr. David knows that your uncle is here, then Pete won't care and he will send the letter on. But either way, Mr. David'll get the story and we'll make some headway in our mystery."

"In other words," Frank said, "if Pete does not send my letter, then we can take it for granted that Mr. David does not know about Don and Morton, and about my uncle changing his plans and not going west. If Pete does send the letter, you think it's certain that Mr. David's in on the scheme, whatever it is, and Pete knows that?"

"That's it. And if Mr. David does not know about these things he will tell you so in a letter sent through Father Campion. If he knows all about these, we'll get some clue from his letter. I don't think he'd lie to us, and if he tries to get around the questions, well, we can see what he's trying to do."

"You ought to go in for a corporation counsel or federal detective instead of engineering," Frank declared as he gathered up his writing material. "Let's get it done and then we can mail

'em to-night. The quicker we get them in the mail the sooner we'll clear up this mystery."

"Give me some of that paper," George said. "I'll tell Mr. David I'm writing for you. I'd better do the one we'll give to Pete. Now get busy; we've got to get them off before dark."

"What date is to-day?"

"June 22."

The boys fell silent and wrote rapidly. George finished first, because his letter was short and to the point. Frank told the whole story in detail, and asked many questions, but he tried not to suggest any tone of complaint. It was to be merely a straightforward narrative with blunt questions.

"That's finished," he said at last, handing it to George for his approval. "Now, then, let's hurry. We've got to get home before dark."

They hurried downstairs and made their way to the boathouse, and thanks to Pete's instructions and their trip in the *Dragon-Fly* that afternoon, they had no difficulty in opening the sliding door and getting the launch out to the dock. George dropped the door and left the boathouse by the landward entrance, locking the place when he went. The boys started the motor and the speed boat dashed away amid a swirl of water. They rounded the island and sped toward the north shore and Pete's camp.

The sun was marching down the western heavens amid a troop of fleecy, golden clouds. Shafts of fiery bars and trailing banners of yellow and purple were flung across the sky and reflected in the smooth, glassy surface of the lake. Swal-

lows skimmed the crest of the waters, and far up in the air, two large cranes winged their way homeward, to seek shelter for the night in Lonesome Pond.

"Is there anything more wonderful than this!" cried George. "How I wish father and mother were here to enjoy it!"

"Slow down," Frank called, as the boat drew near shore. "We're coming to the landing. There's Pete now. I bet he's surprised to see us."

Frank steered the *Dragon-Fly* skillfully and when the boat drew alongside the dock, Pete caught the painter and fastened it to a dolphin.

"Huh, where did you boys learn to handle boats? What is the trouble?"

"We promised to write to Mr. David and we decided we'd better get a letter off to him before we get lost in the woods," said Frank, handing him the envelope. The Indian gave him a sharp look, but took the letter and calmly put it into his pocket.

"When will that go out?" Frank asked.

"Early to-morrow morning," Pete informed him. "The R. F. D. man passes here early in the morning on his way to Tamarack. He collects the mail on his way down and it catches the early morning train to New York."

"All right; thanks, Pete. That's off our minds now, and we're ready for the fun. See you first thing in the morning!"

As the *Dragon-Fly* sped away toward Forest Island, Pete stalked to his cabin and paused in the

doorway. He was satisfied when he saw the launch rounding the island and then only did he enter the living room. He took the letter from his pocket and contemplated it for several moments. Finally, drawing a hunting knife from a scabbard attached to his belt, he inserted the tip of the blade under the flap of the envelope and carefully loosened it. The glue was still fairly soft and he managed to open the flap without injuring it. Then he read the letter and a faint, good-natured smile wrinkled his bronzed face. Refolding the sheet, he was placing it in its envelope when footsteps sounded outside. Springing across the room, Pete thrust the letter back of a picture hanging on the wall. He was busy packing when a guide from a neighboring camp entered the room.

Meanwhile, when the boat had sped away from the dock in front of Pete's camp, Frank guided it toward Forest Island.

"What's the idea?" George called.

"Why, Sherlock, you surprise me," Frank exclaimed. "Can we afford to let Pete see us going in the direction of Father Campion's house? We've got to cover our tracks and I figure we'd better pull up in the bushes this side of the Iroquois Hotel. We can strike the road and it won't take long to walk to the rectory."

"Good head," commented George.

Frank gave the wheel a twist, headed due east, shot out from behind Eagle Island and went to the mainland near the hotel. When they drew near the shore, George stopped the engine and the launch coasted alongside a clump of scrub pine

that hung over the water. They secured the boat by tying the painter to a tree. Then they leaped ashore and walked in the direction of the hotel. A short distance this side of the Iroquois, they found a path leading from the lake to the main road. They followed this and soon reached the highway.

"We'll have to do a little sprinting if we're going to get home before dark," George said, starting down the road at a lively pace.

"Go ahead, lead the way," Frank called, falling into the stride. "Say, there may be a short cut to the church. Let's ask at some cottage."

"Good idea number two! There's a house over there now."

They hailed a man lounging on the porch. He pointed to the crossroad George had already noticed and told them it was a short cut to the church and rectory. They followed it up a steep hill, turned abruptly to the left and came upon the rectory nestling among the trees.

"That was quick work," said Frank, as they walked around the house and ascended the front steps. The housekeeper answered the bell and told them Father Campion was out on a sick call. Would they come in and wait? The boys were nonplused for a minute and held a quick consultation about the prudence of leaving their note with this woman. Something in her manner and her kind eyes reassured them. Frank stepped forward and offered her his letter. "We want Father Campion to put this in the mail for us, if it isn't asking too much, because, you see, we don't want

anyone else to touch it, because it's important."

"All right, boys, I'll take good care of it and when Father Campion returns I'll give it to him with your message."

She smiled upon them in a kindly manner and there was a twinkle in her friendly eyes. She was accustomed to strange requests and strange persons at the priest's front door and the boys' request did not surprise her.

"And if you please, tell Father if any letter comes to us through him, to keep it until we call. And please, you won't tell any one about this letter?"

"No, no, boys, not a word to a soul. It's Father Campion himself will tell you I know how to keep a secret. You can explain it all to him when you see him."

They thanked her and hurried down the back road toward the main highway. The sun had disappeared behind the western mountains and the last signs of day were leaving the sky. The heavens were silver gray where the sun's light had touched them before it fled from the fast-approaching night. Darkness crowded into the valley and gradually climbed the mountain sides and the last quivering wave of purple fled before its approach.

Running at top speed the boys reached the launch and started for the island. As it was, when they reached the boathouse, they were forced to use their flash lights to get the *Dragon-Fly* into its docking place. They went back to the lodge in the dark, because they did not want to let Pete

see their light, and entering the house, they made straight for bed.

"I'll shoot any one—even a loon—that wakes me up to-night."

"I hope not. I mean, I hope no one wakes us up, 'cause we've got to get up mighty early, you know."

George's voice almost trailed into silence and both boys were fast asleep before they could say good-night. It was, perhaps, several hours later when Frank awoke with a start. His body was quivering and there was a buzzing in his ears like the singing of telegraph wires in a heavy wind. Sitting upright in bed, he gazed around in the darkness until he realized where he was and what had happened.

"Only a dream," he said, in a low voice. "I thought the night prowlers were after me again."

He had grumbled this complaint and fixed his pillows, but before he could lie down, a soft whistle floated in on the night air. It came from the direction of the tower and before it had died away another whistle answered, this one coming from the clump of trees near the sleeping porch.

"George!" Frank called in a low voice, "George, wake up!"

He leaned over and grasped his friend by the shoulder, shaking him gently.

"Who—what's——"

"Sh-s-sh! Not so loud. Listen, the night hawks are back again."

In the night silence the boys heard the shuffling of feet on the sand and they could tell from

the sounds of the footfalls, that their men were passing around to the rear of the house. They heard a door close and then all was quiet.

"Well," George said, "let's get busy."

"I woke out of a dream and heard them whistle."

"They've come into this house—into the kitchen, I'll bet. We'd better investigate."

They left their beds and made their way to the inner room. Frank drew on a dark bathrobe and George donned a long black coat.

"Let me take your hand," George whispered, "I'll go first."

Their hands met in the dark and George felt his way down the dark hall until he came to the stairs. Grasping the banister, he descended slowly and cautiously, pausing upon every step to listen for the slightest sound. In this manner they reached the lower hall and started for the living room. They paused in the entrance and remained still until their eyes grew accustomed to the dark, and they could distinguish some of the objects in the room. As they peered into the blackness ahead of them, they saw a faint streak of light across the dining-room floor and from the direction of the kitchen came the murmur of voices.

George squeezed Frank's hand and slowly he picked his way through the living room, toward the light. At the entrance to the dining room they discovered whence the light came. The swinging door between the two rooms had a small glass

window set in it, as they recalled, and through this the glimmer shone.

George dropped to his hands and knees and pulling Frank after him, motioned him to a place in the shadow of a sideboard. With his eyes fastened upon the lighted patch in the door, he himself crept forward. They could hear a low conversation going on in the kitchen, but even by intent listening they could not catch the words. It was George's object, however, to find out who the visitors might be. When he reached the door, he rose cautiously to his feet and flattened his body against the wall. Then, by craning his neck he was able to apply his eye to the crack between the loose-swinging door and the jamb, and see the occupants of the next room.

Frank crouched in his place intent on catching every sound, while George made his survey. The scene in the kitchen was interesting. On a shelf above the table was a lighted lamp, the wick turned low. Underneath it stood two men; one was Pete Tahawus and the other was the dwarf. The Indian stood with his arms folded across his chest, his shoulders squared and his head held high. The lamp was behind him and its direct rays struck his head and cast a shadow on the dining-room door; hence the dim light through the window. The dwarf stood in front of Pete and close to him and turned in such a way that George caught a side view of him. He wore a soiled pair of khaki pants, high leather boots and a blue flannel shirt. His mass of dark hair was brushed back upon his head in pompadour style. The hump upon his

back gave him a queer appearance and seemed to accentuate the harsh, ugly expression on his deep-lined face.

Trembling with excitement, his heart pounding rapidly, George stepped back and beckoned Frank toward the door. He slipped his hand over his companion's mouth, and it was fortunate he did, for a faint cry struggled to Frank's lips when he looked into the kitchen. He had never seen his uncle and this close view of the deformed creature was startling. The dwarf's appearance was more than grotesque; it was repulsive, and George felt the tremor that passed through his body. He realized what this discovery meant to Frank, and he felt a great weight on his heart when he thought how Frank's newborn feeling of good will toward this uncle must be shattered. He clung to his friend, his left arm around Frank's shoulder and his right hand clasped over his companion's mouth. Both shook with excitement, when they heard the dwarf's harsh voice giving commands.

"You, Pete, do as I tell you," he cried sharply. "I'm running this game."

"I'll do as you say this time," Pete answered. "Maybe I won't another time."

"Never mind about other times. Do as I tell you now and the other times will take care of themselves. Put out that light and we'll go."

The Indian extinguished the lamp and plunged the kitchen in darkness. The boys heard their footsteps as they crossed the kitchen. A door closed; a lock snapped, and all was quiet.

The boys remained standing near the door, bodies tense and ears alert, listening for the slightest sound. None came and George removed his hand from Frank's mouth and withdrew his arm from the other's shoulders. Slipping his hand into Frank's, he retraced his steps and his friend followed. They reached their room without any mishap and when the door was locked, Frank gave vent to his pent-up feelings.

"My uncle, ugh!" he said in disgust. "I came to this place to see that and allow him to play these tricks on me!"

There was bitterness, disgust, anger and hatred in the boy's tone. He threw off his robe and lapsed into silence. George said nothing, because he knew Frank would recover from this mood, if left to himself.

"Well," Frank said, when they were in bed, "what do you say to that discovery?"

"I have no explanation to offer. Now I'll ask you a question. Will you get grouchy and disgusted and allow that dwarf and Indian and a few others to scare us home?"

"No, don't worry, that will never happen. I'll stay now because I've got to find out the truth about my uncle."

"That's all," George said sleepily. "May we finish the night in peace."

They remained quiet and exhaustion and weariness dragged them into the depths of sleep.

VIII

THE HEART OF THE WOODS

THE boys awoke from sleep and lay still, listening to a sharp knocking on the door. They sat up in bed and gazed at each other, their eyes half closed and their brains clouded by weariness and lack of sleep. The knocking was resumed, louder and more insistent, and this time they knew the cause.

"That's Pete," cried George, springing out of bed, and going to the door of the bedroom to open it. He found Pete standing in the hall.

"You sleep well. Get up and dress. I shall have breakfast ready when you come downstairs." The Indian turned and went down the hall.

Frank and George dressed quickly and hurried to the kitchen, where true to his word, Pete had breakfast waiting for them. As they stepped into this room, both looked around and the previous night's scene flashed before their eyes. Pete's back was turned and the boys exchanged knowing glances as they sat at table and ate their breakfast, with relish. Neither spoke, for they knew that Pete was in a hurry to start, and they applied themselves to the task in hand.

Breakfast over, they followed Pete to the boathouse. Riding on the water of the pool was a large and beautiful canoe, equipped and ready for

the journey. A tent, blankets, cooking utensils, all rolled together tightly, lay on the bottom of the craft near a well-filled pack basket. Alongside lay a high-powered rifle and fish poles and it surprised the boys to see how little space everything occupied.

"All right, you boys sit in front," Pete ordered, steadying the frail craft until the boys found their places. The Indian dragged the canoe out of the boathouse, locked the place, and boarded the canoe. With long powerful strokes, he sent the bark skimming across the lake toward the Tamarack River.

Meanwhile, in the east, behind the jagged range of mountains, a great sea of fire billowed and sent out spears of light, flinging them far up into the heavens. The streaks of light grew brighter and rushed farther up the sky as though pursued by the red ball that leaped from the fiery sea and mounted after them. Waves of mist rolled down from the mountains and mingled with the white filmy lake of mist that lay motionless in the valley. It was not motionless long, for spears of light snatched from the heavens, were flung into it, tearing it asunder and driving the scattered remnants through mountain gap and gorge. They pierced even the tufts of mist that floated over the lake, lazily. Blue water and islands, dew-drenched forest and mountains, stood forth clear and bright to welcome the day.

"I never saw anything like this before," George whispered, subdued by the grandeur of the scene and the sunrise he had witnessed.

"It is wonderful!" Frank agreed. "And the air is different—and the colors of everything."

"See those mountains!" cried George. "They surely look higher this morning. What mountain is that ahead of us?"

"Mount Ampersand; Chief Ampersand," Pete answered. "The outlines of that mountain form an Indian's head. That is where it got its name. On top of Ampersand is a fire station and a fire warden. During spring, summer and autumn he lives on top of the mountain and watches the woods for forest fires. He has a telephone, and when he discovers a fire, he telephones to the nearest game warden or the nearest fire station and warns the man in charge."

"I have often heard of forest fires and the amount of damage they do," George said. "What starts them?"

"Forest fires have destroyed thousands of dollars' worth of timber in the Adirondacks and they start in many ways. Along the railroad, sparks from the engine cause fires. That is why the States passed a law forcing the railroad to use oil-burning engines during spring, summer and autumn. These engines throw no sparks.

"But most fires," Pete continued, "are caused by careless campers who do not put out their fires, or build them in the wrong places. Sometimes a match or ashes from a pipe or cigarette starts the woods."

"I didn't think the woods caught fire so easily."

"Yes, they do. Remember, these forests are thousands of years old and the leaves, ferns and

moss and other growing things have died and lain on the ground for ages. This forms a deep floor of dried, rotten matter, like punk. This is called *duff* and when once it starts burning, it continues for weeks."

"How do the men put out the forest fires?"

"Sometimes they stamp them out. They also dig trenches around the fire and keep it in one place, and let it burn until the rain puts it out. I have seen fires smolder all summer and far into the autumn, because the rainfall was not heavy enough to soak deep into the duff."

They had crossed the lake and Pete guided the canoe into the channel of the river. From the marsh that bordered it a great crane arose and sailed over the lake. Red-winged blackbirds called from their haunts among the cat-tails and crows filled the woods with their harsh cries. Close to the canoe, a fish leaped out of the water, caught his prey and plunged back again.

"Yesterday when we were fishing, we heard a splash and saw a strange animal among the stumps. He swam for shore and disappeared in the bushes," Frank said, describing the animal.

"That was a beaver," the Indian informed them. "When I was a boy, we trapped beavers and in those days the lakes and streams were filled with them. But they have been killed off in these waters. A while ago the State brought some from the West and planted them in the mountain streams."

Pete guided the canoe to the bank and pointed to a tree near the water's edge. Toward the root,

the tree trunk had been gnawed until the cut part resembled a spool.

"A beaver did that. The tree is resting on a very thin stem and the thinnest part is toward the river. When a strong wind blows from the south, the tree will fall into the water."

"Why do they cut the trees like that?"

"To build their homes. Trees are cut and the wind blows them into the water and they float to the point where the animals want their dam. Behind this the beavers build their homes of cattails and reeds."

Pete guided the canoe back to the channel and swept down the stream with great, wide strokes. Although the river was wide at this point, there was only a small space in the center that was navigable. On both sides of the narrow channel, stumps of trees jutted out of the water or were visible just beneath the surface. Close to the banks, and partly submerged in water, the boys saw many large trees that had been blown down and now lay on their sides, their great roots gray and decaying.

"Why are there so many stumps and fallen trees in the river?"

"A back wash from the river caused that. A few years ago, a large dam was built in the village and that threw the water back upon the land. Some of the trees were at the water line, and others worked loose at the roots and were blown down."

The canoe swept on and the river narrowed, until the banks crowded close to the channel. Rocky headlands jutted into the water and the

swift current rushed between these carrying the frail bark with it. The boys sat rigid, not daring to move, fearing lest one slight mishap would send them crashing to destruction. The Indian guided the canoe through this broil of water and as they swept beyond the rocks, the canoe entered a wide stretch in the river, and rode placidly on its broad, calm water. Pete sent the canoe toward the left, and the boys saw a small stream which snaked its way out of the wood and emptied into the Tamarack.

"This is Cold Brook," Pete said, as he steered the craft up into it. "This stream is the outlet of Lawrence Lake; it brings those waters down here into the Tamarack River. We are now going southeast and we will gradually bear to the south and reach Lawrence Lake. We shall be on the other side of Mount Ampersand when we reach our camp."

The brook turned to the right and plunged into the deep, thick woods. The trees crowded close to the water's edge and great, moss-covered vines trailed from them to the ground and floated on the surface of the brook. Porcupines and woodchucks watched them from the banks, and occasionally a beaver or a mink, startled out of the water, paddled across a rocky slide and gazed at the canoe and its occupants in disgust or anger. They saw strange birds, the cedar waxwings, the grosbeak, the pine finch, and their ears heard bird songs and cries that surprised and delighted them.

On and on they plunged into the deep forest and

it was mid-morning when Pete finally drove the canoe to the bank and leaped ashore.

"This is the carry," he informed the boys, steadying the canoe while they jumped out. "We could continue by water and reach the lake, but this is a short cut. We must carry our stuff through the woods for half a mile."

George flung the pack basket on his back, and took up the gun and fishing rods. Frank shouldered the folded tent and blankets, while Pete took the canoe, turned it bottom-side up, and stooping, lifted it to his head and shoulders and led the way through the woods.

Not a sound came through the forest; not even the chattering of a squirrel or the scampering of a chipmunk. Treading the soft duff, the voyagers made little noise, except when they stepped upon a twig or a dried branch. It was a strange, alluring silence that held captive every faculty and cast its spell upon the boys. So impressed were they, that neither spoke as they followed Pete down the trail toward the lake.

A burst of sunlight greeted them as they came out of the woods and tramped across the clearing to the edge of the lake. An expanse of shimmering blue water stretched before them, its shore lined with stately pine trees. It was not very large, for the boys could easily distinguish the woods on its farthest side.

"Here we are at last," Pete said, sliding the canoe into the water. "We call this Lawrence Lake after Frank's uncle. All this property belongs to him."

They put their outfit into the canoe, clambered aboard and Pete paddled down the lake. In a clearing at its foot they disembarked, drew the canoe upon the beach and unloaded their duffel. Pete selected a sheltered spot, on a slight elevation, in the center of a balsam grove and in this place he decided to pitch his tent. Cutting some young trees, he used them for tent poles and he set these up upon a small knoll. Over the poles he slung his tent and lashed the canvas to stakes driven in the ground. He steadied the tent with guy ropes, lashed to trees or to stakes in the ground. Over the tent proper, he stretched another canvas that did not touch it in any place. He finished, and explained his work to the boys.

"I pitched the tent on this knoll to keep high and dry; and I chose this elevated spot that sloped towards the lake, because the water will not lodge any place. That outside canvas is called a *fly* and it keeps the rain from the tent. You see where the tent canvas rests on the poles; well, when it rains the water soaks through. The fly prevents that, because it catches the water and sheds it on both sides. The fly does not touch the tent, nor any poles and the water cannot soak through. Later, we will dig a ditch around the tent; this will catch the water and run it into the lake, and none will go into your tent."

Pete took the ax and started into the woods.

"Come, we will cut some small trees for our storehouse."

He chopped down a number of saplings and carried them to a spot near the tent. He arranged

the poles and built a shelter in the shape of an Indian tepee, wide at the bottom and coming to a point at the top. Covering this with freshly cut pine boughs, he stored the provisions inside.

"This makes a pretty good storehouse. The pine boughs will keep out the water. We will put the food in this pack basket and hang it to the top of the storehouse. Porcupines and other prowling animals cannot get at it."

The Indian consulted his watch. "It is not eleven o'clock, but I know you boys are hungry. I will help you get dinner and then you can take a rest while I go cruising for timber."

With quickness and dexterity Pete cut two green saplings and drove them into the ground. Each of these had a fork at the top, and he laid a stout, fresh, green limb from fork to fork, and from this cross-bar swung a kettle, suspended from a wire. From a near-by spring he brought water and under the kettle he built a roaring fire. He poured the water into the kettle and into this he put a piece of beef, potatoes, onions and some salt.

"We will have a stew for dinner. I hope you boys will remember how I do all this. You must learn all these things, because I shall be too busy to help you very much."

Placing two high, flat stones a short distance apart, he built a fire between them. He rested a small pan on these stones directly over the fire, and filled it with water. Then he put coffee into a pot, and poured all the boiling water over it; and finally he put it over the glowing coals of the small fire and allowed it to simmer.

"Come, boys, get your tin cups for your stew and coffee."

Sitting on a fallen log and using a large rock for a table, the boys ate a hearty meal. It consisted of stew, bread and butter, and coffee with sugar and condensed milk. Frank and George were in excellent spirits and they laughed and shouted until the woods and mountains reëchoed their voices. Pete squatted cross-legged upon the ground and at least did not squelch the boys' hilarity. He answered all the questions hurled at him, and in spite of his pretended calmness, George thought he was restless. As soon as the boys had finished eating, he helped them clean the cups and pans and put them in the storehouse.

"I will fix the tent for you, and you can lie down and sleep for a couple of hours. Late in the afternoon you can go to the brook for trout or fish in the lake for the big fellows."

Going to a fallen pine, whose branches were dead and dry, Pete cut off the limbs. He scattered the pine twigs upon the ground inside the tent and over these he spread a rubber blanket.

"When you want to rest, roll in your other blankets and lie on this. The dampness from the ground will not reach you through that rubber."

Pete led them to the beach.

"If you want lake trout, you can catch them in any part of this body of water. If you want the little fellows, follow the shore line until you come to a stream. That is Lawrence Brook. If you go below the falls and fish in the rapids, you'll get plenty."

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He lifted the canoe into the water.

"I will leave you now and go into the woods to cruise for timber. You have your rifle and revolver and if any animals bother you, you can shoot them or scare them away."

Pete crouched in the canoe and with powerful strokes of the paddle sent it skimming over the lake. The boys watched him land upon the opposite shore and disappear into the woods. Lazily they returned to the tent and rolled in their blankets, and stretching themselves comfortably upon their bed of pine needles, they fell asleep.

IX

A NIGHT IN THE FOREST

IT was well into the afternoon when George awoke and lay staring at the roof of the tent. His thoughts were busy indeed with the events of the past few days and he was trying to calculate how the present trip was connected with the scheme Pete's crowd was concocting. Suddenly, he sat up and his eyes widened with the thought that was big in his mind. What if Pete abandoned them and left them stranded in the forest! What if he had brought them to this spot at the command of the dwarf and would leave them here until the crowd had carried out their plans?

"Oh, tommyrot!" he cried, throwing aside his blanket. He was impatient at such notions and disgusted to find himself worrying over what might happen. Why cross bridges until one came to them?

"Did you say something?" Frank asked, wide awake in an instant.

"Get up and we'll try that trout stream Pete told us about."

"What time is it?"

"Quarter after four," said George, consulting his watch. "Come along, I can hear those little beauties calling for us."

Frank tumbled out of his blanket and they got

their fishing tackle and left the tent. Following Pete's directions, they walked along the shore of the lake until they came to the outlet, where the water tumbled over a series of falls and finally swept with a swirl into Lawrence Brook.

The boys chose a spot immediately under the falls and their efforts were met with success. Mr. Lawrence was the only one who fished in this stream and the trout seemed eager to welcome the fishermen by taking their bait and then fighting until they lay upon the bank gasping and exhausted.

The boys pursued them relentlessly until the cool air and the long shadows warned them that it was time to return to camp.

"My, what a catch!" George said, as he took the creel and started for home. "We have enough fish for three meals."

"I've been wondering when Pete will come back to help us eat our fish," Frank said, a frown gathering on his brow.

"Why won't he return?"

"I could give you many reasons, but it isn't necessary. You know them pretty well."

"Oh, shucks! Why look for trouble until it comes," George said, with a successful attempt at cheerfulness. "Here, you clean the fish and I'll start the fire and get supper."

Not as quickly, perhaps, but quite as adequately as Pete, they cleaned the fish, started a fire, and prepared their meal. One sure test of a dinner is how it tastes, and seated on the log at their stone table, the boys forgot Pete and the dwarf and

everything else disturbing, in the full enjoyment of their meal. When supper was over and dishes washed and stacked away, Frank took up the old subject.

"Well, Pete isn't here yet, and I don't think he'll come back to-night," he said, as they walked to the shore and stood looking across the lake.

"That thought came to me this afternoon," George admitted. "I didn't say anything about my suspicion, because I didn't want to disturb you."

"You can't disturb or surprise me now with suspicions," Frank said bitterly. "We can expect almost anything from that gang—and from my uncle."

"They want to scare us and get rid of us for a while. Well, there's no use worrying now. Pete has the canoe and we are stranded until we figure out how to walk back. Come, let's go to that high point where we can get the lay-out of the land."

George indicated a strip of land that jutted into the water. It was higher than the point on which they were standing and it cut off their view of the lake to the north and east. They walked toward this headland, keeping close to the water. It was the walk of but a few minutes, and they quickly climbed to the highest point that jutted over the lake. From this elevation they had an uninterrupted view of the entire lake region.

A glance showed them Lawrence Lake with its shores heavily forested with a variety of trees, mostly pine, to judge from the color and pointed tops. On the west shore was a beautiful slough

between two low hills, and here were reeds, water lilies and sand beaches. This was the place where the inlet stream poured into the lake and along its banks the boys saw a gorge filled with elms, and the ever present alder.

As they watched this slough, they made out two deer standing in the water among the lily pads. The graceful animals held their heads erect and sniffed the air for the scent of friend or foe. Satisfied with their surroundings, they plunged their muzzles into the water and fed on the succulent plants that grew beneath the surface of the lake. Another, then another, joined them and in a short time the watchers saw six deer, enjoying their evening meal in the slough.

The sun was sinking behind the towering western peaks and the light purple shadows quivered on forest and lake. The glow touched the smooth, sleek bodies of the deer, until they resembled the inhabitants of some wonderland. The boys watched them, not daring to move, lest a sound would send them bounding into the woods.

"It's a wonder they don't scent us," Frank whispered.

"The wind is blowing our scent away from them," George answered, turning his cheek to feel the soft caress of the evening breeze. They remained motionless for a while longer. Then George nudged his companion.

"Come, let's get back to camp. It's getting dark and chilly."

They left their places very quietly and descended from the headland. As they went toward

their camp, they felt the night chill coming from the forest and they saw the purple shadows deepen over the earth and sky. They heard the birds cheeping sleepily in the trees, and they were startled by a porcupine that paddled across their path, gnashing his teeth at them. They were glad to reach camp and build a roaring fire in front of their tent, to dispel the darkness and the chill that engulfed the earth.

"We're in for it now," George said, dragging a log toward the fire. "Pete won't come back tonight and we'll have our first experience alone in the heart of the woods."

Frank did not answer, but continued steadily at his task of collecting fire-wood for the night. It was useless to complain or bemoan their difficulty, and expressions of bitterness against Mr. Lawrence and his crowd would not help or mend matters. Only for their experiences of the past two nights, the bright, blazing fire before their tent would have been pure comfort. Frank realized this and tried to forget everything but the joy a fellow always gets in a camp with other boys. Before the grim blackness of the night had engulfed them, they had a huge pile of firewood heaped before their tent.

Seated on a log, the boys conversed in a low tone and carefully cleaned, oiled and loaded their rifle and revolver. They had finished and were gazing past the fire into the black pall that surrounded them when they were startled by a confusion of bawls and whimpers coming from the woods behind them. They sat tense, gripping their

firearms, frozen to silence by the queer sounds. The noise died away, and the boys gradually regained some of their composure. It would have calmed their anxiety considerably if they had known that these sounds were the family bickerings of an old she-bear and her cubs, quite harmless unless disturbed. Their imagination, however, pictured wild, fierce animals ready to pounce upon them and destroy them.

"Ugh, what a mess!" Frank said, peering on all sides, expecting to see eyes glaring at him from the darkness.

"No worse than sleeping in a zoo," George answered, piling more wood upon the fire.

Silence, the strange silence of the great woods, clutched them, and they were haunted by a queer feeling they could not describe. The deadly calm, the loneliness, the blackness beyond the fire, all these aroused in them a fierce desire to rush from this place and to shout themselves hoarse and shatter the stillness. And by the same token, they were almost afraid to speak.

"This silence will drive me insane. I wish something would make a noise," George said, drawing his coat tighter to his body.

His wish was granted immediately, in a way he did not expect. From the depths of the woods came a long-drawn-out, piercing cry, that was faint at first, then rose higher and drew nearer. It died away, leaving its echo ringing in their ears and its effects tingling their nerves. They leaped to their feet and crouched against the tent when

they heard a scurrying among the dead leaves on the other side of the fire.

"The inside of the tent for mine! It feels safer anyway!"

"I'm with you. Let's put wood on the fire first. The light is the best thing to keep animals away."

"I wonder if that was the cry of a wild cat?" Frank asked.

"I don't know, because I never heard one. I saw a wild cat once, in a zoo. I know there are wild cats in these woods, and I've often read about the scream of a wild cat."

"That wasn't much like a scream."

They entered the tent, leaving the flap open to allow the heat and light to enter. Wrapping their blankets around their shoulders, they sat near the door with their weapons close at hand.

"These guns won't help us much in such darkness," George said, peering out into the blackness.

"They'll scare any animals that bother us."

George did not respond to this, but changed the subject quickly.

"I can't understand Pete, and his sudden changes. He was very friendly on this trip; answered everything we asked and even made some free-will offerings. Why didn't he say he wouldn't be back to-night?"

"He's obeying my uncle's orders."

"Listen! There it is again!"

The long-drawn-out, blood-curdling cry echoed and reëchoed through the woods. It would drive terror into any one's heart, and both boys drew back farther into the tent and clutched their guns.

"It's coming nearer. That is a horrible cry. I wonder—?"

"You wonder, what?"

"If Pete is playing a trick on us. These Indians can imitate all the animals of the forest. Perhaps he is trying to scare us."

"Let us hope it is Pete. If he intends to scare us, he's doing a good job."

"We can't take any chances. One of us will stand guard, while the other sleeps. I know we're both scared but I guess we'll sleep, if we try," George said, throwing aside his blanket and stepping out of the tent. He heaped wood upon the fire and on top of this he lay four large logs. Reëntering the tent, he closed the flap and tied it securely. Both boys said their night prayers and they invoked Heaven to guard and protect them from all harm. They performed this duty sincerely and earnestly, and Frank rolled himself into his blanket, lay on his bed of pine needles and fell asleep.

With his blanket drawn around his shoulders, George sat near the tent flap and carefully examined his guns. He broke the revolver and took the bullets from the chamber. Counting them, he replaced them in the chamber, closed the revolver and laid it on the ground beside him. He repeated this performance with the rifle, and laid it across his knees. He applied his eye to a small crack, where the tent flaps met, and through this he viewed the fire and a few feet around it. He saw nothing unusual, no animals prowling around and no eyes glaring at him from the darkness. He

placed his ear to the crack, and silence greeted him, silence everywhere.

The warm, soft blanket wrapped around him, the heat from the fire and his strenuous efforts, all affected him. He grew weary and drowsy; his body swayed gently backward and forward; his head nodded and sank upon his chest. He shook himself many times; rubbed his eyes and made desperate efforts to keep awake. He drummed upon the stock of his rifle with the tips of his fingers, and hummed a snatch of song. He applied his eye to the opening, then his ear, but he did not see or hear an animal. Silence once more; the drumming and the song stopped. He swayed gently, like a tree in a mild wind; his head nodded, fell forward on his breast and his eyes closed in sleep.

George never knew how long he slept. When he awakened with a start he felt his heart thumping rapidly, his muscles quivering and his body cramped and sore. He rubbed his eyes, stretched himself and sat blinking, trying to realize his present position. He leaned toward the crack in the tent flap, when he heard the faint pat, pat of soft paws upon the duff. He pressed his ear to the opening and as he did, something rubbed against the side of the tent.

George sat tense and quiet, scarcely daring to breathe, the rifle clutched in his hands and his ears straining for the slightest sound. The soft footfalls had stopped and he peeked through the crack. The fire had sunk to a heap of glowing embers, for the four logs he had placed on top had not burned.

He saw no animal, but he heard a faint, shuffling noise coming from the direction of the storehouse. Drawing back from the flap, he called to his sleeping companion.

"Frank!"

Reaching towards the sleeping form, he caught Frank's foot and shook it.

"Wha—what?"

"Sh-s-sh! Come here."

Frank rolled out of his blanket and crawled toward George.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

George quickly explained what had happened since he stood watch.

"You open the flap in the tent, and I'll flash the light around the storehouse. The fire is nearly out."

When Frank made an opening large enough, George put the flash light through and sent its rays in the direction of the storehouse. He put his eye to the opening in time to see a large animal disappear around the storehouse. Switching off the light, he drew his hand back into the tent.

"What is it?" Frank whispered.

"It's a large animal of some description. He leaped back of the storehouse before I could see him plainly."

Frank drew apart the flap of the tent and put his eye to the opening. He peered into the darkness, then drew back with an exclamation.

"Near the storehouse I saw a pair of green eyes!"

"You take the light and flash it on the store-

house. I'll look in that direction and have the rifle handy to shoot."

When Frank switched on the flash light and its rays illumined the storehouse, George shoved the gun through the opening and then put his eye to the hole and looked out. A cry of surprise and horror sprang from his lips. The face of a wild beast leered at him from the opening in the provision shack. The animal's eyes glared fiercely and the lips were drawn back showing ugly, gleaming teeth. The head was large and the tufted ears stood up straight and gave the beast a more terrible appearance.

"Oh, Frank!" cried George, drawing back.

"What is it?"

"I don't know. It—it looks like a wild cat. It's in the storehouse, and it drew back after watching the light for a few seconds."

The boys were tense with excitement. For a moment, George could scarcely hold the gun still. Controlling his shaking hands, he aimed the rifle at the door of the storehouse, where it was illumined by the spotlight. His finger found the trigger, but before he could press it there was a loud crash, and a long, piercing, terrifying scream. This was followed by a lashing and beating in the storehouse.

"Shoot, George, shoot!" Frank shouted.

Three shots banged out in rapid succession from the automatic rifle. There was another scream, as the animal leaped from the wreckage. He plunged madly into the forest, and his body brushed the tent in his flight. The crashing and cracking of

the bushes sounded for a moment in the dead silence, as the animal rushed away from the camp.

In the stillness that followed, the boys sat quiet, their ears straining, their bodies tense. Gradually, they relaxed their muscles and calmed their nerves, and courage slowly returned. George was the first to speak.

"Turn on the light and we'll see what happened."

Frank switched on the flash light once more and put it through the opening in the flap. The spot of light illumined the wrecked storehouse, the poles of which lay scattered upon the ground. Amid the ruins lay the pack basket, and the provisions that it held were tumbled on the ground.

"I suppose the wild cat knocked it down."

"All our provisions are on the ground," Frank said, taking his place at the opening and examining the wreckage. "We've got to get that food and bring it into the tent, or we'll have swarms of animals upon us—and we'll go hungry."

"Better stir up the fire, too. You hold the flash light and I'll put some wood on the embers. Gee, I'm scared, but it's got to be done."

They opened the flap of the tent and Frank flashed the light in every direction, before they stepped outside. George leaped to the woodpile and threw some small branches on the fire. A bright blaze sprang up and illumined the space in front of the tent. The light gave them courage and they remained outside, George heaping wood upon the fire until a great, roaring blaze leaped skyward.

"Let's get those provisions," said George, springing toward the tumbled down storehouse. Frank followed and they gathered the food, threw it into the pack basket and hurried into the tent with their salvaged food.

"Did we get everything?" Frank panted, dropping the basket to the ground.

"All but the pans and dishes and a few other things that no one will eat."

"Good! Now let's lock ourselves in."

They carefully tied their door and resumed their former positions.

"I'll stand watch if you care to sleep," Frank said, drawing his blanket around his body.

"I can't sleep now; I'll sit up with you for a while."

They talked in low tones and neither slept during the remainder of the night. When darkness fled from the earth and sky, and the east was streaked with gray bars of light, the boys felt safe. Then, weary and exhausted, they rolled on the ground and forgot everything.

X

PETE JOINS HIS GANG

WHEN Pete Tahawus left the boys alone in camp on that exciting Wednesday, he paddled across the lake and landed on the opposite shore. He dragged the canoe out of the water, hoisted it to his back and took a trail that led around the falls and came out on the bank below the rapids. Pausing to rest there, he gazed silently at the trees that surrounded him. A rich stand of timber it was, majestic pine, hemlock, spruce, birch,—straight and tall, inspiring to look upon. Incidentally, these trees represented a fortune for the man who had the right to turn them into lumber.

Not the beauty and glory of the scene, however, held Pete. The longer he looked about him, the more clearly anger and hatred showed themselves in his face, his head thrown back, his clenched fists. "Thief!" he hissed. "White man, thief! Poor Indian, loser!" Something in his own words gave him pause and he lifted his head momentarily, as though scenting danger. "Poor Indian! Humph! Indian rascal like white gang! Pete Tahawus rascal like Ed Lawrence and fat Jim!" His chin fell to his breast, and folding his arms across his chest, he stood with a scowl upon his brow that suggested deep struggle. Then, with a shrug of

his shoulders, he bounded lightly toward his canoe. "Too late now. Too bad for white boys—but what about Pete and Indian boy?"

Pete stopped at the foot of the falls, for the roaring of the water was soothing music to his ears. Then, with a grunt of disgust, he launched his canoe and stepped aboard. Viciously he drove the paddle into the water, and the light bark sped swiftly down the outlet. The scowl on the Indian's face disappeared, but it was certainly a look of grim determination, not of peace, that took its place.

One mile below the lake, the outlet turned sharply to the north, and one hundred yards beyond this curve, it flowed into Cold Brook. The confluence of these two streams was a short distance from the carry between the Brook and Lawrence Lake, where the boys had crossed that morning. Pete passed these points rapidly and continued his journey. All thoughts of the boys, however, were pushed far into the background as he kept his determination before his mind.

It was mid-afternoon when Pete paddled into the Tamarack River and directed his course upstream. He reached the small bay below the bridge—the place where he had hidden the *Dragon-Fly* on the day the boys had overheard him in conversation with Jim Morton and Don. Sliding the canoe upon the beach, the Indian hid it in the bushes. Climbing the path, he crossed the road, passed through the woods and came to the hunter's shack. He paused on the edge of the balsam grove that surrounded the shack, and cautiously

circling the small building, stopped in front of the door. The soft murmur of voices came to his ears as he listened, but he soon realized that he could not catch the words. A bitter smile crept over his face as he raised his hand and struck the door three sharp raps; then one lighter than the others. When he heard the bar raised, he pushed open the door and stepped into the room.

A startled hush fell upon the men in the shack when they saw the Indian standing near the door. The light was dim and for a minute, Pete stood staring at the occupants who were grouped around the table and had arisen at his entrance.

"Well, what are you doing here?" Don cried, closing and barring the door.

"Have I not a right to be here? Do I not belong to your lair?" Pete asked calmly. Black looks had little effect upon him.

"Weren't you told to get those boys away from the island? Did you do as you were told?" Don cried, anger blazing in his face.

"Yes, I was told to get the boys away, and I did."

"Where are they?"

The Indian swung his hand toward the south.

"In the deep woods, in that direction."

"Why didn't you stay with them? What if they come back?"

"They cannot come out of the woods until I go after them. They have no boat and they cannot get out any other way."

"You should have remained with them, Pete. We don't want them bothering us and breaking up

our plans," Jim Morton said, speaking in a low, soothing voice.

Pete looked toward the other men around the table. There were three of them, Big Jim and two evil-looking lumberjacks whom Pete knew but too well.

"The boys cannot get out," he reassured Jim Morton. "They do not know where they are and if they knew the woods they could not come back without a boat or a canoe. No one else knows where they are. A few nights alone in the woods will cure them."

"You should have stayed with them," Don snarled. "You'll answer to us if they get back here and interfere."

Don glared at Pete and his anger reached the boiling point. All his hatred and suspicion of the Indian burst forth in ugly words.

"You fool savage; you woodrat; you——"

"That is what you think," Pete said, interrupting. "That is why you want me away from here. You want to rob me of my share of the returns; but you cannot cheat me. I am no fool Indian, I am no woods-rat, and the quicker you learn that, the better we will get along."

Don's body grew tense and his black eyes blazed their anger. His thin frame shook with rage and his fingers twitched. His secret hatred of the Indian came to the surface and was revealed in the present argument. He had always sneered at Pete and considered him an ignorant redskin and a fool. When he associated with him, however, he found this Adirondack guide an educated, shrewd man,

his own superior in every respect, including morals. Don's sneers turned to dislike, when he found that this primitive American was totally his superior, in manners, and education, not to mention physical powers, and here he was, showing now the shrewdness of his free ancestors. "You are a woodrat," shouted Don, losing control of his temper. "You're a fool Indian! Do you mean to spoil our game? If you or those boys try to give us away, I'll get you. Do you hear?"

He was interrupted by a low cry from Pete, who lunged forward and caught him in his powerful arms. Lifting him off the floor, Pete sent him crashing against the wall, and pinned him there, crushing him with his forearms.

"Listen, Blackface! You will not touch those boys. If they are hurt you will answer to me."

The Indian's voice was low, but it thrilled with a deadly note. To show that he meant what he said, Pete swung Don from the wall, and hurled him into a corner of the shack.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" Jim Morton cried in a quavering voice as he sprang between the Indian and his fallen foe. "Stop, gentlemen, no more fighting. That's enough, Pete, that's enough," he said, holding the Indian.

Pete folded his arms and stood grim and silent, making no more effort to attack Don. The two lumberjacks helped Don to a chair, but they said nothing and did not interfere. They secretly sided with Pete and they had often expressed their fear that these men would trick them and deprive them of their pay. They would not inter-

fere, anyway, because this was not their code. Every man for himself, was their motto.

"Gentlemen," Jim Morton said soothingly, "we must stop our fighting. We have plenty of work to do, and we must get through it quickly. We're liable to have Bill O'Day's men down on us at any time, if we're not careful."

"I'll hurt no man," the Indian said. "I want that Blackface and every one else to know that no harm must come to those boys. I'm in this now and I won't back out."

Don did not answer. Throughout the conference that followed he sat grimly silent. Jim Morton did all the talking. After a brief discussion, the men arose from the table and left the shack. They separated, and Pete went toward the river and his canoe.

Paddling slowly upstream, Pete entered the lake and started toward Forest Island. That his thoughts were ugly was clearly visible on his face, and even in the manner in which he handled his paddle. No man's thoughts are ever so ugly as when he knows he himself deserves a share of the contempt or scorn that he is handing out to others.

Pete's anger had not fully subsided when he drew near Forest Island. He allowed his canoe to drift, as he tried to decide what course to follow. Should he go to his own camp and return to the island after dark? In connection with his whole secret affairs, two persons at present loomed big. One was Dick, his own son, who might be paying him a visit now, any day, and

who must never get the slightest inkling of this business. The other was the real boss—the dwarf, and under present circumstances, the sooner Pete saw him, the easier would his mind be. So thinking, the Indian quickly decided to see the dwarf before running the chance of bumping into Dick at the camp, and he abruptly turned his craft toward the island.

Landing between the boathouse and the tower, he drew the canoe upon the beach and strode to the tower. He knocked on the door, but received no answer. Walking across the lawn to the lodge he passed around it to the rear porch. As he mounted the steps, the kitchen door opened and the dwarf stepped out. When he saw the Indian he drew back, surprised.

"Pete, what are you doing here?" he called.

Pete drew himself up to his full height and folded his arms across his chest. A cold, deadly look crept into his eyes as he stared into the dwarf's face. The latter knew the Indian's nature and saw Pete's ugly mood. He changed his tone and spoke gently.

"Well, what has happened to the boys?"

"They are safe. I came back to get my share. I do not want those fellows to cheat me."

"You'll get what's coming to you; no one's trying to cheat you. What put that into your head?"

Pete did not answer and the dwarf continued: "Where are the boys? I thought you would stay with them?"

"The boys are safe, away in the woods. They

will not bother you. They have no boat, and they cannot escape, until I go after them.''

''All right, come inside.''

The dwarf turned and led the way into the kitchen.

XI

DICK TAHAWUS ACTS

WEDNESDAY afternoon, about the time Pete was leaving the boys at their camp, and immediately after his own dinner, Dick Tahawus sought Father Campion and found him resting on the porch. The priest looked up from his paper and greeted the boy with a friendly word. This was the first time he had spoken to Dick since their conversation of the previous day, when the young Indian had acted so strangely and puzzled him with his queer words. He did not ask Dick now, for an explanation, nor would he speak of the incident again. He knew this lad too well to make such a mistake.

"Good afternoon, Dick. Won't you sit down and rest?" Father Campion said, pointing to a chair.

"Thank you, Father, but I don't think I'll stay long. I came to ask you if I could visit my father this afternoon."

"Yes, Dick; visit your father. If you wish to remain with him a few days, do so. I think we can spare you."

"Thank you, Father. I may stay with him tonight."

"Don't hurry; take your time."

Dick twirled his hat in his hands and gazed in-

tently at the floor. He started to speak, then stopped, unable to bring himself to the point of revealing what was disturbing him. His actions on Tuesday came back to him and he knew he should apologize to Father Campion, but his proud nature triumphed and with a hurried "thank you," he turned and went down the path toward the lake. The priest shook his head as he watched the young Indian disappear into the woods.

Dick Tahawus went directly to a boathouse that stood on the lake shore, partly hidden by the clump of pines. This was Father Campion's boathouse and Dick kept his canoe in it—the canoe he prized as highly as does a cowboy his horse. Launching this he paddled slowly, close to shore, and proceeded leisurely toward his father's camp. When he reached the small peninsula on which the camp was situated, he drew his canoe upon the shore and went to the house. The doors and windows were closed and locked, as Dick discovered by examining every one. Finally, he drew a key out of his pocket and unlocked the back door.

A dead silence greeted him as he went through the house and inspected all the rooms. Everything was in order and his father was not there; and when he found, by looking into a small storeroom off the kitchen, that the tent, pack basket and camping outfit were missing, he knew that his father had gone into the woods.

Returning to the living room, he walked around in an aimless manner, wondering what he would do, remain at camp or return to the rectory. While he was debating this question, he stopped

before a large picture hanging on the wall and for the first time he noticed that it was tilted sideways. Reaching up he grasped the picture to straighten it, and as he pulled it from the wall, a letter dropped from behind the frame and fell to the floor. When he had straightened the picture, he picked up the letter. The envelope had been opened, not in the usual fashion, but by raising the flap, and the stamp had not been canceled. Even then, Dick paused in surprise when he saw John David's name and for a minute he did not grasp what this all might mean. His suspicions reached their climax when, slowly turning the letter over, he saw Frank Lawrence's name on the back of the envelope.

For several minutes Dick Tahawus did not move. It was becoming perfectly clear to him that he had in his hand a letter written by Frank Lawrence to his guardian, which had come to Pete's hands, probably to post; but for some reason, it had been opened and hidden behind a picture while Pete went camping. At such rates, the letter would surely never reach John David. Dick's first instinct was to mail it at once. A second thought reminded him, however, that the letter had been opened and hidden for some reason. He might visit Forest Island and ask Frank about sending it on—it would be a good excuse for carrying out Father Campion's suggestion that he meet the boys and help them out a bit. But no—if his father had opened Frank's letter and held it, unknown to Frank, that was against the law and punishable. And why should his father be break-

ing laws and opening other people's mail? Of course, this was Frank Lawrence, nephew of "The Mountain Dwarf"—and his father would have no spare love for the young fellow. But even so, Pete Tahawus was known far and wide as an honest man and an upright one. If this represented crooked work, it wasn't his father's fault, but some one else's.

By this time, Dick was impatient with his own arguing and opening the envelope, he jerked out the letter and read it. The information it contained certainly held his interest—and increased his suspicions. He knew something of Big Jim Morton and the idea of his starting a conversation with Frank on the train bothered Dick. Jim had a floating reputation at the village, as a man of smooth voice and sharp practices. And what of the cries and calls and light flashes on Forest Island? Frank wrote that Pete suggested "night-prowlers or fish pirates" as the explanation, but Dick couldn't swallow that. It looked as though his father knew who they were but did not intend to tell the boys—Ah! that could account for taking the boys away on a camping trip and that was where they were now. He had seen that the tent and pack were gone.

Dick was sitting cross-legged on the floor, in true Indian fashion. Absorbed in thought, he still fingered the letter. As his eye caught Frank's name again, he remembered Mr. Lawrence and was ready to dismiss the whole affair as just a part of the uncle's plans, when he recalled the fact that Mr. Lawrence had gone west and that his parting

instructions to Pete Tahawus had been to let the boys manage for themselves.

As always, the thought of Edward Lawrence made Dick's anger flare up. Although his father had never made a confidant of his son, he had told Dick often enough of the great wrong that they had suffered at the hands of the white man. Not so long ago, Dick had been talking to his father about the possibility of a college course in engineering or forestry and Pete had declared it impossible unless the two of them, combining their efforts, should work early and late to obtain the necessary funds. It was then that Pete had decided to accept Mr. Lawrence's offer as guide and general overseer on his estates—but Dick remembered clearly the vehemence with which his father had declared to him that if he and Dick could only have what really belonged to them, they could live as free men, and the best of colleges would be open to him!

Dick rose to his feet with the intention of putting the letter back behind the picture where his father had left it; his anger and bitterness were stronger than his curiosity concerning the mystery he had unwittingly stumbled upon. If he could but get his claws, like a wild cat, into the man he hated so intensely—what a joy it would be!

On the instant, he paused—held stock still by a new thought that had flashed into his mind. Frank wrote that Jim Morton said that his uncle had not gone west, but was in the mountains! Was Edward Lawrence using Pete Tahawus to help him carry out more schemes? Was his father

being made the victim again, of the white man's villainies? That was enough—investigation was the only thing and on the spot. Dick determined first to visit Forest Island, to see if there was any sign of Edward Lawrence there; and then, to follow his father and the boys to Lawrence Lake.

With a quick, sharp movement he drew himself up, whirled on his heel and hurried to a desk in the corner. He found an envelope and putting Frank's letter in it, sealed it and addressed it to John David. He left the house, locking the doors behind him, and ran up the road toward the main highway. There was a mail-box nailed to a tree and he dropped the letter in it and raised the signal to let the R.F.D. mailman know that there was a letter inside. This done he returned to the shore, launched his canoe and paddled eastward, keeping close to land.

Dick guided his canoe southward until he reached a point on the mainland opposite Forest Island. This end of the Island was covered with a thick pine woods and any one approaching from that direction could not be seen by inhabitants of the lodge. Landing on the pebbly beach, he dragged his canoe among the scrub pine that grew upon the shore. He climbed the bank and slipped into the woods, quietly making his way to a spot back of Forest Lodge. From this point of vantage, he had a view of the east side of the lodge, the boathouse and the tower. There were no signs of life around, everything was sleeping peacefully under the afternoon sun.

Dick's first impulse urged him to leave his hid-

ing place and explore the grounds around the camp, but his Indian nature and woods training bade him wait. Stepping into a clump of bushes that completely concealed him, he sat upon the ground and waited, his eyes coasting from side to side for any signs of life. He had been watching for fifteen minutes, perhaps, and was deciding on a future course of action, when his attention was attracted to the lookout tower. The large door at the foot of it was open and standing in the opening was the misshapen figure of a man. He was examining his surroundings and, apparently having decided that all was well, he closed the door of the tower and walked rapidly toward the rear of the lodge. As he drew near, Dick had a good view of him. His gray hair, combed in a pompadour, accentuated the ugliness of his large face. There was a big hump on his back, but his broad shoulders and long, apelike arms seemed strong and powerful. He was not a delightful object to look upon and Dick sat quiet and tense lest the slightest move should attract the attention of this ugly fellow. His whole desire, however, was to leap from his place, throw himself upon this dwarf, and show him what the just anger of a free Indian could do! More than ever Dick was determined to find his father and the boys, to be ready to fight with them against this monster!

Dick's anger subsided slowly and he gained control of himself, when lo, as he raised his head and peered through the screen of bushes, he saw a canoe approaching the Island from the south! Although it was far out on the lake, Dick recog-

nized the figure as he swung his paddle easily and gracefully. His eyes never left his father, as Pete drew the canoe upon the shore and went toward the lookout tower! Dick crouched low in the bushes as Pete stalked across the lawn toward the rear of the lodge. He was too stunned to move as he saw the dwarf step upon the porch and confront Pete and then enter the house with him, for the appearance of his father presented a new fear!

What had happened to those two boys his father had taken into the woods? Where did he leave them? Why did he not bring them back with him? Why did he leave them in the woods? Why was he meeting the dwarf like this, all alone on the island —for evidently, the dwarf was startled at Pete's appearance.

Dick's first sensible thought was that he would wait around the camp to watch developments and see if the boys would return. That seemed hopeless, however, on second thought, because Pete had the canoe. Perhaps his father would go back to the boys? This was improbable. His father would not make that long journey again to-day. He had taken the boys away for a purpose and he had returned without them. And Dick knew too much of the wilderness on Lawrence Lake to think that two city boys could be left alone there just for fun! Nevertheless, he must watch and wait, for he must guide his actions by the movements of his father.

For three long hours, Dick lay in the bushes watching the house. There were no signs of life

and no one appeared. At length he left his hiding-place, sped through the woods, launched his canoe and keeping well out of sight of any watcher on the Island, paddled toward Father Campion's boathouse and hurried home to get a late supper from the housekeeper.

XII

THE RESCUE

DARKNESS was descending when Dick returned to the boathouse after a late but hearty supper supplied by the good-natured housekeeper. Carefully he secured a blanket from the locker, placed it together with his paddle in the canoe and pushed his craft out of the pool into the lake. Closing the doors after him, he locked them, entered the canoe and paddled in a southerly direction, keeping close to the east shore. He put into a sheltered bay south of the Iroquois Hotel and there he waited until the last flush of day had fled from earth and sky, and the stars had come out one by one in the vast spaces in the heavens.

Paddling slowly and quietly, Dick then ventured from his hiding place and started for the pine woods that covered the eastern end of Forest Island. He reached his destination in safety and pulling his canoe into the scrub pine, proceeded through the woods to the spot he had used that afternoon as an observation post. The darkness did not puzzle the Indian boy, because he knew every square foot of these woods and when once he struck the trail, he could remain on it in the blackest night. His progress was slow and noiseless and he reached his hiding place without any

mishap. He sat upon the ground and waited. By carefully parting the bushes, he could view the camp and its surroundings.

One hour passed and Dick's patience was rewarded. The door of the lookout tower opened and the light streamed out, illumining the doorway and throwing into bold relief the squat figure of the dwarf. The door closed and darkness shrouded the island once more. By leaning forward and listening intently, Dick caught the low murmur of voices going in the direction of the boathouse. As these died away, the stillness of the night was broken by the startling hoot of an owl on the island. This was followed by the tremulous notes of a loon, that arose and fell over the water in quivering cadences. Dick gave a low grunt when he heard them, for he knew that both calls were made by human beings and not by the birds they represented. The owl's cry was a poor imitation, but the loon's was quite natural, and he knew it came from his father.

Rising to his feet and stepping from the bushes to secure a better view, Dick saw a light flash a number of times from the direction of a boat upon the lake, and this signal was answered by flashes from the boathouse. A slight commotion arose upon the dock and Dick heard the tramping of feet and the murmur of voices, as the night-prowlers moved toward the lookout tower. Finally the men entered the tower and quiet once more settled on the island.

Dick was all curiosity to discover what might be the subject of the conference in the tower, but his

better judgment gave him pause. His father was in that crowd and Dick knew Pete's acuteness too well to risk matching his own cleverness against it—especially since playing the spy would mean creeping out into the wide, open space surrounding the tower. Not only would discovery make his father angry, but it might even bring down on both of them the malicious wrath of the dwarf—and there was no guessing the evil consequences if he were once their open enemy. Dick saw no wisdom in taking rash risks.

Furthermore, it was now clear that his father had left the boys alone in a wild part of the woods! It was Dick's best plan, he decided, to reach them as early as possible in the morning and then, if his father returned, their camp would be complete and ready to take a stand against the dwarf and all his gang, if there were suspicious doings under way. With these thoughts uppermost in his mind, the Indian boy paddled away from the island in a wide detour and proceeded in the direction of the south shore of the lake. There he selected a spot free from campers, dragged his canoe upon the shore, rolled in his blanket and fell asleep.

The silver-tinted dawn looked over the eastern ridge of mountains and when the stars saw it they fled one by one from the heavens. But Dick Tahawus was before them. Before the first star had disappeared and the gray bars in the east had begun to streak the sky, he shook himself free from his blanket, launched his craft and started down the river toward Cold Brook.

The morning air was chill and Dick thought

longingly of hot breakfast but he did not have time to prepare it. He must reach Lawrence Lake as soon as possible. He plied his paddle vigorously and when he entered Cold Brook, his body was deliciously warm and alive. His canoe was making progress as rapidly as any motor launch. Sweeping down Cold Brook, he reached the carry leading into Lawrence Lake. There he shouldered his canoe and with the quick steps of a woodsman he strode across to the lake and was soon paddling once more. Keeping close to the eastern bank, he guided his canoe toward a log house that stood not far from the falls. As he paddled, he kept his eyes alert for any indication of the boys' camp and as he drew near the log hut, he caught a glimpse of a white tent among the trees on the opposite shore. With a grunt of satisfaction, Dick turned and proceeded toward that point.

Noiselessly, the Indian boy slid his canoe upon the beach, and noiselessly he approached the camp. Before the tent lay the dead ashes of fire. Scattered on the ground near by were the poles of the storehouse and strewn among these were some of the provisions the boys had missed in the dark. It was a strange looking wreck and it instantly aroused Dick's interest. He walked carefully around the ruined storehouse, examining the ground with the greatest care. When he saw the footprints in the sand, he dropped on his hands and knees and studied them closely. Leaping to his feet, he gazed anxiously around him, his hand resting on the revolver at his hip. He saw nothing moving and the only sound was the chattering

of a squirrel. Creeping to the tent, he listened and heard the regular breathing of the sleeping boys. He circled the tent, then returned to the space in front of the camp and gathered wood for a fire.

Dick started a fire between the two upright sticks, filled the pail with water from a spring and slung it over the blaze. Searching among the ruins, he found the coffee pot and a can of coffee—a good beginning for a breakfast, at least. Just at that point, a sleepy voice from the tent called out: "Is that you, Pete?"

Dick straightened and turned toward the tent, as the flap swung back and George and Frank stepped out. They halted, and for a moment the three boys gazed at each other in silence.

"Oh—I thought——" Frank started to speak, but stopped abruptly. It was an embarrassing moment for the three, especially Frank and George. Instead of the Indian guide, they found themselves confronting a young man of their own size and age. His flannel shirt, khaki pants and stout hunting boots proclaimed him an inhabitant of the woods, and his dark skin, dark eyes and wiry hair told he was an Indian. For the moment his proud, arrogant bearing had left him. In its place was a friendly attitude and as his face lit up with a smile, the boys read naught but kindness in his nature.

"We expected Pete Tahawus," George said, recovering from his surprise.

"I'm Dick Tahawus. Pete's my father."

"Oh, I see! Did Pete send you after us?"

A scowl gathered on Dick's face, but after an instant, he smiled again, as he answered: "Why, no. But I didn't think you'd enjoy this part of the woods all alone; so I thought I'd pay you a visit. Father Campion said you might like to have me come around this summer to see you. Do you want to go back to the island?"

Frank and George looked at each other, then at Dick Tahawus. The quick-witted Dick could see that they had not yet taken in the situation, and to change the subject from his father, he pointed at the ruined storehouse.

"What happened last night?"

The boys eagerly recounted their terrifying adventure and when they had finished, anger blazed in Dick's eyes.

"That was a lynx!" he exclaimed. "I examined his tracks in the sand. He was very hungry or he would not come into your camp like that."

"A lynx? We thought it was a wild cat," Frank cried.

"Both are dangerous when they are hungry."

"Dangerous is right," said George. "We thought our end had come last night."

"I hope we'll never put in another night like that," Frank added with a shudder.

"Something is wrong! It was wrong to make you stay alone in the woods," Dick cried fiercely. His black eyes flashed fire and the look upon his face as well as his clenched fists and his entire bearing showed his inward feelings.

"Pete was only obeying orders, I suppose," Frank said with a shrug. "My uncle is to blame.

He brought us here and now it looks as if he is trying to scare us home."

Dick's flash of anger had subsided and he answered slowly, "Maybe you are right, but my father should not obey such orders."

The odor of coffee floated on the atmosphere and Dick turned abruptly toward the fire, saying as he went, "Let us have breakfast first; then we'll talk afterwards."

The boys dragged out the pack basket and helped Dick prepare a breakfast of bacon, eggs, coffee and bread. To resume the conversation, Dick pointed to the pack basket and then to the storehouse.

"Did you have the basket of provisions hanging from the top of the storehouse?"

"Yes, Pete put it there."

"That accounts for the wreck and the scared lynx. He leaped for the pack basket and his weight was too much for the poles. They tumbled down on him and he thought he was trapped. When you shot your gun he was more scared than you."

Dick grinned when he thought of the scared lynx; then he grew sober as he noticed the boys' tired faces. Breakfast was ready and they sat around their rough table and had a hearty meal. When they finished, Dick turned to Frank.

"When I found out that you were here alone, I said I would come and take you home if you wanted to go. I want to know why you're here. You said your uncle ordered my father to bring you. How do you know that? Will you tell me

the whole story? You seem to think, just as I do, that something is wrong."

"Go to it, Frank!" cried George. "Tell Dick the whole story why we came and everything about our trip. He knows more about this country and all than we do."

So completely had Dick won the confidence of the boys that Frank started from the beginning and told him all about his uncle's scheme and their adventures on the way to the mountains and their experiences since arriving at Forest Island. Dick listened in silence, and as the story unfolded, he found himself drawn closer and closer to the boys. Frank felt, as a thrill, the Indian's sympathy when he mentioned Mr. Lawrence's alleged wrongs to his own brother. That led him to say more than he had intended about his dislike for his uncle and the story his father had told him. He also told Mr. David's side, out of justice to his uncle. When the story was finished, Dick was clearly puzzled.

"I can't understand. It does not seem reasonable that your uncle sent you here and now plays these tricks on you. But, perhaps you are right about your uncle ordering my father to do these things. I saw the dwarf talking to my father at Forest Lodge."

"You did? When?"

"Yesterday afternoon, after I read your letter to Mr. David and found out you were at Lawrence Lake."

"My letter! Then Pete didn't post it!" Frank burst out, before he could consider his words.

"No, perhaps he forgot. But it had been opened. That's how I read it—but then I mailed it in a new envelope."

Dick told the boys his own experiences and his glimpse of the gang on the island.

"There is something wrong and those men mean no good for my father! He can beat any man in the woods, but who is a match for city fellows—rich men like—well, like Jim Morton and Don! We'll go back to the island secretly and discover what's going on. Then we can tell what to do!" Dick spoke with the greatest vehemence and a bitterness at which George wondered.

"We're with you, Dick. We'll stick it out until I find out all about this uncle of mine!" Frank cried.

"Good," Dick echoed, leaping to his feet. "Come, we'll clean up the dishes, knock down the tent and get back to the island right away."

XIII

THE RETURN

WITH the quickness and cleverness of his father, Dick took down the tent, rolled it and stored it away in the canoe. The pans, cooking utensils and food were packed in the basket and placed on board with the rest of the duffel. They put the canoe in the water, climbed into it and started up the lake.

"My father might have taken you to Mr. Lawrence's hunting shack. That's just over on the other shore; you can see it through the pines. You could have slept in peace in that camp, and all the wild animals of the woods wouldn't bother you."

"Pete told us about a camp on this lake, but we didn't see it," said George.

Dick guided the canoe close to the shore and showed the boys where the camp was situated. When they noticed the direction Dick was taking, Frank asked, "What way are you going? Pete brought us in from the other direction."

"We'll go down the outlet. It's a roundabout way, but it's safer. And we're not so apt to meet any one."

Dick beached the canoe near the falls, and took the trail his father had used the previous day.

They carried the canoe between them and soon launched it on the waters of the creek below the falls. They clambered aboard and Dick wielded the paddle vigorously, sending their boat down the outlet at a rapid pace. They talked over the situation in which they found themselves; they repeated their adventures and they puzzled over the mysteries that surrounded them. Their conversation was carried on in low tones, for Dick had warned them and cautioned them not to make any undue noise.

"You never can be too safe," Dick said. "These woods and waters are my father's hunting and fishing grounds and he might turn up any minute—and not alone either."

They reached Cold Brook and Dick paddled to a point of land opposite the carry that led from the brook to Lawrence Lake. He beached the canoe, and dragged it into a thick clump of bushes.

"Take your blankets and come with me," he ordered, turning to the boys. "We'll stop here for a few hours. You can sleep and I'll watch. If I get tired, I'll call one of you and let you stand guard. I don't think my father will be coming to Lawrence Lake, but we'll be on the safe side."

Dick led the boys to a shady spot under some projecting rocks. They rolled in their blankets, and with the soft pine needles for their mattress, they fell into a deep sleep. Dick climbed to the top of the rocks, and from this point of vantage he could look down Cold Brook and see any one who might approach. He could not be seen, for

he was concealed by a few stunted trees that grew in the crevices of the rocks.

At noon, Dick returned to the boys and roused them. He stationed Frank on the top of the rocks, while he and George prepared dinner and ate their meal in silence. When George had finished, he relieved Frank and gave him his opportunity to eat. When the utensils were cleaned and packed away, Frank joined George on the rocks and Dick rolled in one of the blankets and slept. He told the boys to call him at four o'clock, unless something happened, and they would resume their journey.

The hours of the early afternoon passed quietly and Pete did not appear. At half past three, the boys aroused Dick and they stored their duffel in the canoe and continued their trip down Cold Brook. Their way was uneventful and when they reached the Tamarack River, they put in at the point where the brook flowed into the river. Dick led them into the deep woods and they prepared supper, ate it and waited for darkness before starting upon their tour of investigation.

"After dark, we'll paddle to the island and try to find out what's going on," Dick said. "I know the island, and I'll take you to a place where we can see and hear what's happening."

Darkness came and the boys boarded their canoe and paddled up the Tamarack River. Slowly and quietly, Dick guided the craft to the lake. With eyes and ears alert, he looked and listened, but he caught no sight or sound of any one on the river. When they entered the lake, Dick paddled

more rapidly and they soon made the eastern shore of Forest Island. Hiding the canoe in the bushes, they crept up the bank, and made their way through the woods to the point above the camp. From this place, the land sloped toward the lodge, the tower and boathouse, and here the boys stopped. Below them lay the clear, open space around the camp, where the men must cross from one building to another.

"We'll have a long time to wait," Frank whispered. "They never come until after midnight."

"They were here very early last night," Dick informed them. "They probably felt they were safe since they got rid of you."

"I figure that's one of the reasons they wanted us out of the way, though that doesn't exactly square with Frank's uncle inviting us up here," George said. "It would be like a Nick Carter story if we could discover some foul scheme and break up a rough gang."

"Maybe we will," Dick answered grimly. "I only want to get my father away before trouble comes."

The boys lapsed into silence and waited for the appearance of the night prowlers. Their patience was rewarded sooner than they expected. From the distance came the gentle purring of a motor boat, and as the noise grew louder, the boys realized that it was approaching the island. When it drew near the shore, the chugging ceased.

"The motor has stopped," Dick whispered. "They'll row into shore. It is safer and no one will hear them."

Dick had scarcely spoken, when the silence was broken by the startling hoot of an owl, followed by the call of the loon.

"That's it!" exclaimed George, "just the sounds we heard."

"And let me tell you we were scared," Frank whispered.

"Whoever imitates the owl does not hoot well. That loon call is my father's, I'll swear."

"Look, there are the lights!"

The last notes of the bird calls had died in the distance, when the darkness was illumined by flashes of light that came from the lake. These were answered by flashes from the shore. Then silence and darkness wrapped the lake and island once more.

"Can't we get nearer and see them? It's maddening to stay here with all those mysterious lights and sounds going on down there," George said in an excited whisper.

"We won't go any nearer," Dick replied. "They'll discover us if we go on the beach. I have a better plan, and we'll try that."

From the shore came the tramp of the men as they made their way from the boathouse to the lookout tower. The low murmur of voices reached the boys and once in a while a loud-spoken word, followed by a hissing sound, a caution to keep quiet. Finally the tramping on the beach stopped and from the boathouse came the faint creak of oarlocks.

"Listen!" Dick cautioned. "There! The boat is putting off. See, now—George stays here on

guard, and Frank and I take the canoe and follow that motor boat. If you get a chance," turning to George, "examine the boathouse and tower, but for goodness' sake, be careful and don't let them discover you! Stay under cover! Come on, Frank!"

George settled himself in his hiding place while Dick and Frank hurried through the woods to the canoe. Hauling forth the camping outfit, they hid it in the bushes. Then they pushed the canoe into the water and boarded it.

"We'll go slowly until they start the motor," Dick whispered. "Then we can follow them easier. Listen, there it goes now."

The purring sound reached their ears and when the chugging increased, Dick plunged his paddle into the water and sent his light bark leaping over the lake.

"They'll lose us," Frank said, straining his ears to hear the noise of the receding motor boat.

"They'll not get very far ahead. Anyhow, they'd be afraid to go full speed."

"I wonder if they have the *Dragon-Fly,*" Frank whispered.

"No, it's the slower motor. The *Dragon-Fly* is too speedy for the dark lake. Besides, it makes too much noise."

They sped on in silence for some time and the noise of the motor preceded them. Suddenly Frank spoke over his shoulder to Dick.

"I can't hear it any more; can you?"

"No, the motor's stopped. They're entering the river."

Dick paddled slower as he approached the river. He sent his canoe forward cautiously until the sound of the motor came to them again and then he swept on more rapidly.

"They're down in the wide part of the river," Dick said. "That's why they have started up the engine."

"Do you think they'll stop below the bridge?"

"That's the best place for them to put in. We'll land where you did, the first day. Listen, the motor's still again."

"You know the country around here, don't you, Dick?"

"Humph! Don't worry, we won't get lost, even in the dark."

They remained silent, while Dick turned the canoe toward the north bank of the river and beached it near the end of the bridge. Having hid their craft in the bushes, Dick led the way up the slope and Frank followed, holding Dick by the hand. When they reached the small brook that ran near the road, Dick squeezed Frank's hand as a warning and both stopped. The sound of a running motor came to their ears. They listened cautiously for several moments and then at Dick's signal, crossed the stream and halted on the opposite road.

"See—it came from the road, not the river," Dick whispered. "It's an auto."

Down the road leading from the village of Tamarack, an automobile crept slowly, searching its way with one dimly burning headlight. It stopped a short distance from the bridge.

"We're on the right track!" Dick whispered. "That auto is pulling up near the shack where you saw Jim Morton."

Dick was silent for a minute. Then he asked Frank if he would mind remaining alone.

"Can you watch that auto, while I'll go and see what's happening at the shack?"

"Go ahead," Frank answered. "I'll live through it. Anyhow I'm more at home in the woods now."

"Keep a sharp lookout and don't let them discover you," Dick cautioned, before he glided into the dark, dismal forest.

Frank remained in the bushes, eagerly watching the automobile. The dim headlight went out, the motor stopped and the woods were wrapped in darkness and silence. No sound broke the stillness and no ray of light penetrated the gloom. Small wonder that the strangeness gradually affected the watcher in the bushes. He gave quick nervous starts, peering ahead, then looking over his shoulder. Finally he closed his eyes to shut out the wall of darkness that surrounded him. It was impossible for him to remain quiet; the loneliness of the great woods, the utter darkness, the silence, all combined were too much. Why not leave his hiding place and sneak toward the car to see what was going on?

A better woodsman or detective would not have taken the risk, but slowly and cautiously, Frank made his way through the thick bushes that grew near the road. He had instinct enough not to expose himself in the open but he could not remain

inactive and the only course was to creep through the underbrush. After a tedious journey during which he covered but a few yards, he decided to halt and take his stand in a clump of bushes and await developments. That was the luck of innocence—or maybe his guardian angel directing him. He had scarcely settled himself at his post, when the automobile started chugging, the headlight was turned on and the car came down the road in the direction of the bridge. Frank watched it pass and saw it cross to the opposite side of the river. Beyond the bridge, the machine halted again; the motor ran a short time, then stopped and the light went out. Darkness and silence embraced the earth once more.

XIV

THE ATTACK IN THE DARK

FRANK'S restlessness was like that of a small boy at a lecture; it was impossible for him to remain inactive. The silence, the darkness, the mysterious movements of the night prowlers, all these aroused curiosity, nerves, fear —and dulled common sense. Once more he became rash and made the foolhardy resolution to follow the automobile and learn what he could. He stepped from the bushes into the road and listened for the slightest sound. When none came, he walked down the road, keeping close to the ditch and the friendly clumps of bushes. At the bridge, he paused again, peered into the darkness, listened intently and then decided to cross. Once upon the structure, he kept close to the steel frame-work and advanced slowly, step by step, his hand upon the friendly girders. There were no lights, no sounds, nothing to interrupt his progress, and he breathed freer when he realized that he was half way across the bridge. If he were only on solid ground once again, he would feel safe. He had a queer sensation every time he stepped on the boards and heard the soft swishing of the river underneath him.

Frank had passed the large steel upright gir-

der that marked the center of the arch and was on the last half of his journey, when he heard shuffling footsteps coming toward him. He stopped and slunk against the side of the bridge and at the same time the footfalls ceased. Each party knew of the other's presence, but neither moved; each waited for the other to act.

Tense silence prevailed. Overhead in a cloudy sky, a few faint stars winked feebly at the black earth below. The darkness that encompassed the earth seemed darker and more terrifying to Frank as he crouched against the side of the bridge and peered ahead, straining his eyes to see. He felt that he was upon the edge of the world and that one misstep, a quick push would send him hurtling into the water below. He could hear the river as it swished and swigged around the piers that supported the bridge, and the steady, insistent noise struck terror to his heart and set his body quivering. What could he do? Which way should he go? Darkness and desperate men in front of him; darkness and a treacherous river below him, and small chance of escape if he ran back. He was tense with the strain of it all and he felt he could not stand it much longer.

It was not necessary for Frank to decide; his enemies acted for him. From out the gloom, a light flared in his face. There were cries of surprise and alarm, and two men leaped upon him and bore him to the floor of the bridge. He struggled desperately and tried to cry out, but a rough hand was placed over his mouth and he was dragged toward the edge of the bridge.

"Throw him into the river," one of them said, in a hoarse whisper.

Frank renewed his mad lunges and plunges and these brought him back again to the center of the bridge. He fought with all the strength in his lithe body and the cursing men could scarcely hold him. In their desperation, one of them flashed on the light and cried in a harsh voice——

"That's enough! Hit him on the head!"

Frank's whole body felt the jar of the heavy blow. There was a dull roaring in his ears, and he saw many brilliant lights running and leaping before his eyes. He felt himself lifted into the air, then plunged down, down into darkness.

Frank's downward plunge came to an abrupt end. He heard a tremendous noise, like a great splash, and felt a second violent shock. The roaring in his ears ceased; the lights flashed no more, but he felt a cold chill shaking his body. His brain cleared and he found himself floating and floundering in the icy water of the river.

Weighed down by his clothes, his brain singing from the effects of the blow on the head, Frank had a difficult time to keep afloat. He plunged about for a minute, trying to tread water, until he could discover the shore. When he saw the dark outline of the woods ahead of him, he struck out manfully and swam in that direction. "I'll make it!" he cried to himself, as he fought the current that swept him downstream.

The wet, heavy clothes were sapping his strength and he knew he was growing weaker. Turning on his back he tried to float, but his weak-

ness and the heavy weight upon his body pulled him down. The buzzing in his head began again, and a terrible thought came to him. He was drowning. It struck him like another blow and threw him into a panic of fear and terror. He plunged about madly and told himself he would not let himself sink! This feeling aroused his waning strength once more and he lunged forward through the water with long, floundering strokes.

"I will make it! I won't give up!" he cried aloud, and the sound of his voice startled him.

Courage like this could not go unrewarded. Out of the darkness of the night and far above the surface of the water, arose a black object, directly in Frank's path. His groping hand touched it, and with a cry of joy, he flung his arms around it and clung desperately. It was the stump of a large tree and strong enough to bear his weight. He allowed his body to float upon the water and his exhaustion passed and strength returned to him. His brain cleared and he felt a cold numbness coming over him, caused by the chilly water of the river.

When sufficient strength returned, he looked around him to see where he was. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness and his brain threw off the cloud that had enveloped it, he remembered all that had happened. Up the river, scarcely discernible, was the dark outline of the bridge, and close by was the dim shore. This stump to which he was clinging reminded him of the place where he and George had fished on their first day in the mountains. He remembered that

these stumps were close to shore and that there were many of them. He scanned the surface of the water and he saw another dark object lifting its head above the water. Throwing his body along the surface of the river, he touched the thing with his foot. It was solid and it remained firm when he kicked it.

After a minute's hesitation, Frank gathered his courage and swam toward this other stump. Grasping it firmly, he clung to it and repeated his previous performance of feeling for more supports. While resting from his exertions, he heard the soft swish, swish of water, the familiar sound of waves on the beach. Close to him loomed the dark shore and a great joy filled his heart when he saw how near he was to safety. Holding firmly to the stump, he plunged his body downward and gave a cry of gladness when his feet touched bottom. He felt in every direction, and everywhere his feet touched solid ground. When he stood upright, the water reached his armpits, and after a little hesitation, he walked slowly and cautiously toward shore.

Trembling and exhausted, his head singing and his heart pounding madly, Frank crawled up the bank and lay in the bushes. He was safe; safe from the cold depths of that dark, murky river. He was safe, too, from those night prowlers, who had no regard for human life, and as he lay on his back, his body trembling from his terrible experience, he breathed a prayer of thanksgiving to the good God who had brought him through safely. He did not know where he was or how he

could get back to the road, but that did not bother him. He had escaped with his life and no broken bones.

For a few moments as Frank lay in the bushes on the river bank, his wet clothes clinging to his tired body, he felt a wave of warmth and contentment pass over him. This did not last long, however. He became conscious of the muddy place where he was lying and of the cold, wet clothes that clung to his body. A chill shook him and he knew he must arouse himself into activity. He must move around—how often Brother Alpheus had cautioned them about chills and freezing in storms! With this thought in mind, he arose to his feet and gazed around him in the darkness. The silence and the blackness were terrifying, and once again he felt a queer sensation creep over him, and this more than all else aroused him to action.

Frank left the bushes and started to climb the bank toward the woods. Although he was feeling his way cautiously, his foot slipped in the soft mud and he plunged back toward the river. Filled with terror, he scrambled upward, digging his fingers into the earth in his mad fear lest he fall once more into depths of the dark, muddy river. He reached the top of the bank, leaped to his feet and fled headlong into the woods. Anything to get away from the dangers behind him! Onward he plunged, bumping into trees, rushing through brambles and bushes, tripping and stumbling over fallen logs. Every shadow was an enemy, and every tree a weird giant. It was fear and terror

—a real panic—that drove him on and he lost all sense of direction. He did not know where he was going and he did not care. Just to leave the mad, devouring river behind him and to escape all men he ran on and on into the black forest.

Frank's wild racing and loud threshing among the bushes aroused some of the inhabitants of the woods. A few birds cheeped sleepily and wondered at this unaccustomed noise. A squirrel chattered and scolded the intruder, and an owl hooted in mockery at the lost boy. The sharp barking of a fox startled him and sent him lunging and reeling more madly in another direction.

He pushed through a thick screen of bushes that tore and ripped his clothes, and tripped on a fallen log and tumbled forward to the ground. He was stunned, and weakness and exhaustion overtook him. As he lay stretched upon the ground, his hand touched the hard earth. He struggled into a sitting position and felt around him in all directions. He gave a feeble cry of joy, for the solid, trampled earth around told him that he had come upon a well-worn path. He flung himself prostrate and laid his face against the earth and breathed a prayer that came from a thankful heart.

Staggering to his feet, Frank swayed upon shaking legs, and stumbled down the trail. He held his arms extended, touching the trees with his hands and in this manner he guided himself and kept on the path. In the beginning he moved forward cautiously, for he knew he must keep to the trail if he wished to get out of the woods. His progress was

too slow, and in his eagerness he hurried more rapidly. As he rushed forward, he gave a cry of joy and plunged from the embrace of the woods out into a clearing. As he stumbled into the open, an automobile with two glaring headlights swung around a bend in the road and bore down upon him. He stood blinded and dazed, swaying feebly on his weak legs. The horn sounded hoarsely and the brakes ground angrily as the machine came to a sudden stop. A figure leaped from the automobile and hurried toward him, and bewildered, he turned and tried to run away. His exhausted strength could not bear him and he sank to the road.

When a pair of strong arms encircled him and tried to raise him to his feet, he struggled to escape. He heard some one call to him in a soft, low voice; he heard that voice assure him he was in friendly hands, but he was too maddened to listen. He tried to strike out with arms and legs, but he was too weak. He lay quiet and allowed the man to drag him to his feet and take him to the automobile. As he sank into the seat, he thought he heard that soft voice speaking to him and he thought the voice said: "Don't worry, my boy; I'll take care of you. I'm your friend Father Campion." Frank tried to mumble a reply, but weakness overcame him and he slipped into unconsciousness.

XV

DICK'S DISCOVERY

WHEN Dick Tahawus left Frank near the roadside, he walked along the bank of the brook, treading softly and feeling his way from tree to tree. The darkness did not bother or confuse the Indian boy, for he was a true native of the forest and his home was the great, silent woods. He knew the habits of the birds and animals and he could name all the wild inhabitants of the woods. He knew the names of the trees, bushes and flowers that grew in the woods and on the mountains, and of the fish in lake, pond and stream.

Dick's Indian instincts guided him in the darkness and he went forward to his goal. With his woodcraft, he knew he could outwit most people, except one of his own kind. This made him freer and bolder. The blackness and the silence did not trouble him; he was so accustomed to them in the mountains. With so much to favor him, he arrived opposite the shack and suffered no mishap in his journey. Pausing on the bank of the brook, he listened and heard the heavy thud of footsteps as a number of men walked along a well beaten trail. Dick wondered that they made so much noise and allowed the engine of the automobile to run. Evidently, they felt perfectly safe in carrying out their night's work.

Then the motor stopped and the footsteps ceased. A short distance upstream Dick crossed the brook, wading gently through the water. Cautiously he crept toward the shack and when, almost upon it, he heard footsteps coming from the direction of the road, he glided quickly into the bushes. Some one passed close by and Dick knew he was near the path that led in a roundabout way from the road to the shack. The man passed without pausing. Immediately after, the automobile engine started and Dick heard the car move down the road.

Not satisfied with his present position, Dick continued his careful approach through the bushes to the shack. He heard the low murmur of voices coming from the interior, and he circled the building until he found a crack between the logs. He applied his ear and listened, and he heard some one say: "That's all we can take to-night. We can't get any more in the boat."

When Dick applied his eye to the crack, he got an excellent view of the interior. A dimly lighted lamp hung from a bracket on the wall and under this four men were seated at a table in the center of the room. They were Big Jim Morton, Don, and two villainous-looking mountaineers. The table was piled with parcels, wooden boxes and tin cans. One would easily take them for a camper's store of provisions. One of the mountaineers was stowing these in pack baskets. Don gave a signal and Morton extinguished the lamp. Then Dick heard the men leave the shack.

From his position in some near-by bushes, Dick

heard the men pass and move toward the road. When their footsteps had grown faint, he stepped into the path and followed them. Quickly crossing the road, he found the trail that led to the little bay where the motor boat was beached. He knew these trails perfectly and he went forward rapidly, until he realized that he was near the river. He paused when he heard a movement on the beach. He distinguished the creaking of oarlocks and he heard water splashing. From this he surmised that the boat was pulling away from shore.

As he moved closer to the river, he heard some one coming toward him along the path. The footsteps halted and a voice whispered: "Is that you, Zeb?"

Dick did not answer but leaped behind a tree that grew near the path, and his quickness saved him. With a muttered oath, the man on the path lunged forward as he switched on his flash light. Dick saw his opportunity and grasped it. Quick as the flash of light, the Indian boy threw out his leg and tripped his opponent. A grunt of surprise and anger rumbled from the man and he crashed to the earth with a loud thud. Before he could recover and scramble to his feet, Dick had slipped across the path and started through the woods toward the river. He heard the muttering of voices and as he looked back, he caught the flashes of more than one pocket light. It was evident that his assailant had companions close at hand.

Moving along the bank that rose above the river, Dick Tahawus laughed softly to himself, when he realized how easily he had outwitted these men.

They had entirely missed their chance to catch him, because now he could easily slip into one of the hiding places which he knew in this section of the woods. He was positive that even his father did not know these secret places. He was able to continue on his way, however, until he reached a point where the road and the bridge met. The first thing to do now was to pick up Frank and return to Forest Island. The chances were that the gang was headed there. Dick listened carefully until he was convinced by the stillness of the forest that the night prowlers had abandoned the hunt. Then he left his place and crept closer to the road.

Once more Dick selected a clump of bushes, opposite the spot where he had stationed Frank, in which he could completely conceal himself. He crawled carefully into place and he made a soft noise, like the cheeping of a sleepy bird. Although this was the signal they had agreed upon, Dick received no answer, even when he had repeated the call. Dick was impatient but not surprised at the silence, but when he called again, it was in a louder and more decided tone. Still there was no response! Dick now crossed the road and investigated the bushes in which he had left Frank concealed.

When he was sure that his friend was not near the road or bridge, he walked along the bank and crossed the stream, to the spot where the canoe was hidden. But Frank was not near there and Dick's signals and calls got no answer.

Naturally he was alarmed by this time and swiftly, although with great caution, he searched

the woods along the river bank. It was too dark to trace footprints and he finally went back to the bridge and once more gave the signal. No answer, and Frank must be found! Dick decided to cross the bridge and continue his search on the other side. He stepped into the road and started forward—but just then an automobile swung around a curve near the opposite side of the bridge. As Dick leaped back under cover, he heard the machine screech a warning, and he caught the sound of grinding brakes. He thought there were voices, but he could not get more than a murmur and from his position in the bushes, he could not see what had happened. He did not dare leave his hiding place of course, and after a very few moments the automobile sprang forward, sped across the bridge and disappeared down the road toward Tamarack. Dick watched the red light fade into the distance, and if he had only known that it contained his friends, Father Campion and Frank Lawrence, he and George Harvey would have been spared many hours of anxiety.

When the purring of the motor died in the distance, Dick crossed the bridge and searched both sides of the road, calling softly. There was no response and he hurried back to the river and his canoe.

Dick was truly worried now! Not only were they losing precious time if they wanted to get to Forest Island when the gang arrived,—in time to help George,—but what if Frank had actually been captured and was held prisoner by these very men!

Dick launched his boat and paddled into the channel of the river. As often as he dared, he gave the signal call but he got no answer and his searching of both sides of the river was in vain.

Dick's worry was becoming almost fear as he remembered that Frank was a stranger in the vast forest and it was altogether probable he had stumbled into the arms of the night prowlers. Dick decided to make one more effort before abandoning the search. He set out for the shack. In spite of the extreme darkness, he made rapid progress and soon reached the small hut. No sound greeted his ears however, and he could not detect a single ray of light. He crossed the stream, crept close to the cabin and found the friendly crack through which he had looked upon his first visit. The interior was dark, and perfectly silent. In desperation, Dick applied his mouth to the crack and gave the signal. Silence greeted his efforts. No more could be done at the present time and in view of the fact that he could not even guess whether the gang would return to the shack at any moment, the Indian boy's shrewdness and common sense asserted themselves. With a heavy heart, Dick left the hut, and returned to the brook. Launching his canoe, he paddled toward Forest Island.

XVI

WHAT GEORGE SAW

BACK on the island, George sat rigidly still, in his shelter of pine trees. He watched for a long time, but he did not see any one, nor did he hear a human being stirring. The stillness and the blackness of the night began to have their effect and he moved impatiently. Inaction was too much for him to bear and he decided to explore the neighborhood.

Stepping quietly from his hiding place, George walked along the edge of the bank, keeping within the friendly shelter of the trees. When he reached the point nearest the lookout tower he stopped and listened, but no sound broke the stillness. There was something about the tower that kept his eyes fastened upon it although there was very little he could distinguish except the bulky outline. Perhaps it was this mysterious fascination that made him decide that if he wished to discover anything, he must keep close to this building and not the boathouse or the lodge.

Not many minutes had passed when, from one of the boarded windows in the tower, George saw a faint pencil of light shining through a small crack. He waited to see if it would disappear and when it continued to shine steadily, he decided to get a closer view. Stealing down the bank, he

quickly crossed the open space, hoping and praying that no one was spying on him. Once in the shadow of the tower, he pressed close against it, as he listened for any indication of disturbance. Feeling safe in the silence that continued, he resolved to get a view of the interior.

To be sure, the lookout tower was built of heavy, rough stones and George realized that a slight scraping or scratching on the outside could not be detected within. Then, although the window still was above his reach, it was deep enough to afford a good shelter, and with all the boldness of the amateur detective, he gave a quick spring, caught the edge of the sill and with the foothold afforded by the rough surface, he drew himself up to the ledge. Kneeling there in a fairly safe but very uncomfortable position, he brought his eyes on a level with the crack through which the light had gleamed, and after a squirm or two to get himself in place, he managed to obtain a plain view of the interior.

The room that George saw was large and lighted by an oil lamp. Inside sat two men—Pete Tahawus and the dwarf! Dick's father was smoking calmly. The dwarf was seated at a table, examining a number of papers that lay before him. George's spy-hole was very small, and the dwarf's back was toward him, but there was no mistaking either of the men. With another hurried glance around the room, George descended to the ground —and that for two good reasons. In the first place, he remembered Dick's various comments on the acuteness of Pete's senses. Put him on

his guard at all, and not the faintest sound would escape him. If such were the case, George could see that his strained position on the ledge was doubly dangerous. In the second place, he heard a faint purring sound coming from the lake. It was unmistakably a motor, and George surmised that the men were returning. He must get back to his hiding place. Swinging down from the window, he dropped to the sand and hurried among the pines.

As the sound of the boat came nearer, the men in the tower emerged into the open and walked along the beach. The purring grew louder and soon the usual signals were repeated. The lights flared and the activity on the beach was resumed.

From his hiding-place, George heard the murmur of voices rising and falling. Once in a while, some one would make a hissing sound to warn the men and the voices would fall to a lower pitch, only to rise again, apparently more angry than before. There was a quarrel in progress, and George trembled with excitement in his eagerness to learn what it was about. But getting nearer was out of the question because of the wide open space around the tower. He must wait and bide his time.

The activity on the shore lessened, the voices sounded no more and the tramping ceased. George heard the boat pulling from shore. The motor started with a whirr and the boat sped across the dark lake.

Quiet reigned once more upon the island and George decided it was time to continue his inves-

tigations. Emboldened by the success of his first venture, he stepped from his hiding-place, descended the bank and retraced his steps to the tower. Climbing up the stones to his former position on the window ledge, he peered through the crack. The dwarf was the only one in the room now. He was striding back and forth, from one side to the other. His hair was rumpled and tossed, his harsh, dark face clouded with anger and, as he walked, his long arms swung beside his short, stumpy body.

This dwarf was assuredly an ugly object, and he strode back and forth like a caged animal. Suddenly he turned and flinging up his long arms, took a stride toward the very window on which George was perched. The unexpected action startled him and he drew back with a jerk. His hand slipped and when he tried to recover, he lost his balance completely. He pitched forward and his head struck the window boards with a loud thud. His fingers loosened and he plunged backward to the sand. The fall jarred him and shook his whole body, but fear of discovery and fear of the dwarf dragged him instantly to his feet and he staggered across the sand toward the wooded bank. Although his head was whirling, he lost no time in starting to climb to safety and he hoped he would reach the bushes before any one appeared. In vain—for the door of the tower flew open and the short, squat figure of the dwarf was outlined for a moment against the light. That shaft of light, however, illumined the darkness and revealed George's whereabouts.

The dwarf leaped across the sand and approached the fleeing boy. Fear lent strength to George's legs and he clambered up the bank, but when he reached the top, the dwarf was close behind. Before George could run into the bushes, the dwarf flung out his long arm and grasped the boy's ankle. George kicked and struggled, and his quickness and agility enabled him to break from his pursuer's hold. With an angry shout, the dwarf threw himself forward to clutch his opponent.

Without a doubt, the battle would have ended disastrously for George, if a new force had not entered the conflict and turned the tide. When the dwarf made his angry lunge forward, a lithe body leaped from the bushes and snatched the flash light from his hand. Before he could recover from his surprise, a hard shoulder crashed into his chest. As he staggered back, with a groan, a foot met his; he was tripped and flung violently down the bank.

"George, George! Where are you? This is Dick."

"Here I am," George panted.

"Give me your hand and follow me," Dick cried, drawing close to his friend.

Their hands met in the dark, and Dick hurried through the woods, leading his companion. Their pace was rapid, in spite of the blackness of the forest. Dick kept to the trail and they traversed the island and came to the place where the canoe was hidden. They threw their outfit into the canoe

with no waste of time and Dick paddled quickly along the shore.

On the eastern end of the island there was a natural cave in the rocks with a small opening facing the lake. At this point the immense bowlders arose abruptly from the water's edge and towered twenty feet into the air. The small opening was concealed by stunted bushes that grew in the crevices of the rocks. One could discover it only upon the closest examination and then not until the bushes had been pulled aside.

Dick reached the cave and pulling aside the bushes, he pushed the canoe between the rocks. There was a pool of water inside the cave and the Indian boy paddled across this until his craft grounded on a sandy beach.

"We're safe now," he whispered. "Not even my father knows of this cave."

George's sigh was heartfelt. "I'm glad that's over," he exclaimed. "You got there just in time. How did it all happen? And gee—where is Frank? My brain's in such a whirl, I just this minute missed him!"

"I wish I knew," Dick answered grimly.

"You wish you knew!" George cried in alarm. "What do you mean, Dick?"

"When Frank and I left the island, we went to the bridge. An auto came down the road from Tamarack and stopped near the shack. I left Frank near the bridge and told him to watch the machine while I went to the shack. I saw the men inside the house storing packages and bundles in their pack baskets and when they left I followed

them to the river. The boat put off from shore and I had a fight with some one in the dark. I jumped behind a tree, tripped the fellow and got away. But when I got back to the bridge, I couldn't find Frank."

George gave a groan.

"Gone," he said, his voice quivering. "Dick, do you think he was captured by some of those men?"

"I hope not," Dick said. "If they got him, I don't think they'll hurt him, especially if his uncle is in the gang. And I know my father wouldn't stand for any beating or shooting or stuff like that."

"Oh, I hope they didn't catch him," George said, shuddering. "I'd hate to see Frank fall into the hands of that dwarf, the way he looked and raged around!"

"Don't worry," Dick warned his companion. "They won't hurt him. He's safe in their hands. They'll scare him, but they won't hurt him. He is safer than wandering through the woods at night."

"I'm glad you think so. It doesn't sound reasonable that his uncle would let any one hurt him, especially if he's head of the gang! But the whole thing is getting less reasonable all the time."

"We can't do anything until daylight, at least."

"Did you search the woods?"

"I searched the woods, the river and the bridge. He didn't answer any of my signals at all."

"What happened to the auto that was standing near the shack?"

"It moved down the road toward Tupper Lake. When I was searching for Frank another auto came from Tupper Lake and stopped suddenly near the bridge. It was there only a few minutes and then it went on toward Tamarack. But that's nothing unusual. Autos use that road day and night. It's the best way to reach Tupper Lake.

"You asked how I happened along in time to save you," Dick continued, changing the subject. "When I couldn't find Frank, I decided to find you—especially since I figured that the men from the shack would go to the island. When you weren't where I had left you, I started to search but I heard you running across the sand. That was when the tower door opened and the dwarf started to chase you. It was easy to wait for him and snatch his light. I bumped him with my shoulder and tripped him. Every woodsman knows how to do that. But, how did he discover you?"

George told his story.

"I'm glad that dwarf didn't catch me," he ended. "He's the ugliest looking man I've ever seen. Poor Frank, it'll be hard on him, if he sees his uncle in an ugly mood like that!"

"He'll go into a worse rage when he realizes you have escaped from Lawrence Lake."

"Perhaps that's what made him so angry," George cried. "The first time I saw him, he was calm. He was in a rage after the men left."

"If he didn't know before this, he knows now," Dick said, laughing.

The boys remained silent for some time, their minds dwelling upon the strange events of the

night. Then a stray breeze brought them the swift rhythmical sound which is made by a motor boat of speed and power.

"It's the *Dragon-Fly!*" Dick exclaimed. "They're taking a great risk running on this lake at night with the *Dragon-Fly.*"

"Perhaps the dwarf has gone to warn the others," George suggested.

Dick merely grunted and began unloading the camping outfit. He handed George a blanket and ordered him to roll in.

"Get some sleep—if you can," he said. "I've got a little more scouting work to do before the night's over." With that he pushed the canoe through the opening and paddled up the lake. Meanwhile, George rolled in his warm blanket and prepared to sleep.

XVII

FATHER CAMPION LENDS A HAND

WHEN Father Campion saw Frank Lawrence sink into unconsciousness, he realized that the boy needed immediate attention. Speed laws meant little on that trip up the road toward Tamarack and the rectory on the hill. Frank returned to consciousness almost at once but he was too weak to sit up or struggle and the boy's utter helplessness and his wet clothes, as well as the story told by his mad fighting before he had fainted, all spurred Father Campion in his reckless flight down the dark, tree-bordered road.

When they reached the rectory the priest carried Frank into the house, and while the housekeeper prepared a hot drink, he removed the boy's drenched clothing, put him into bed and rubbed his body vigorously with a coarse towel. Before long Frank heaved a deep sigh and smiled faintly up into the kindly face that bent over him. When Father Campion lifted him from the pillows and placed a cup to his lips, he drank the hot liquid gratefully and at once felt his body grow warm and glow with new life. He was replaced upon the pillows and hot blankets were wrapped tightly around him. Frank felt so snug and comfortable

that he closed his eyes and lay quiet and contented.

So far, so good, but Father Campion was taking no chances. He went to the telephone and summoned Dr. Curry. When he returned to the bedroom, Frank was still lying as he had left him—perfectly quiet, and apparently completely exhausted. The housekeeper was standing beside the bed looking down at him.

"Father, he is one of the boys who brought that letter for you to mail," she informed him.

"Yes. He's one of those boys living on Forest Island. There are two and one is Edward Lawrence's nephew. I saw them the night they arrived in Tamarack, when Pete Tahawus took them away on his buckboard."

The door-bell rang sharply and the housekeeper hurried downstairs to admit the doctor. Father Campion met him at the head of the stairs and in a few words explained the night's adventure. As the two entered the room, the doctor's deep, booming voice aroused Frank.

"Well, my boy, how goes the night?" Dr. Curry asked, seating himself beside Frank's bed and grasping his wrist. Before Frank could think of an answer, the doctor had adjusted the ear pieces of his stethoscope, and was listening to Frank's heart and examining his chest. These performances did not take long, however, and Dr. Curry boomed out,

"You're all right! It takes a good deal to kill a chap like you! After a good rest you'll be better than ever."

Frank tried to raise his head from the pillow, but didn't succeed very well.

"You're safe, my boy. Just lie still. This is Father Campion's house, you know."

"How——"

"Never mind how or why. Take life easy and rest."

While he was speaking, the doctor examined Frank's body with quick, skillful fingers.

"I don't think there are any bones broken," he said to Father Campion.

"My head," Frank said feebly. "They hit me on the head."

"They hit you on the head?" the doctor asked as he ran his fingers through the boy's hair and examined the scalp. When he felt the large, hard lump on the back of Frank's head, he gave a low whistle. He motioned to Father Campion, who approached the bed and felt of the ugly lump.

"Were you struck on any other part of the body?"

"No, doctor," Frank answered.

"Well, my boy, you're much better. But we'd like to know what happened to you to-night. Did you and your friend wander away and get lost in the woods?"

Frank was quiet for a minute, trying to think where and how to begin his story. His first thought was of his uncle but that was a story he must not tell to everybody. The doctor waited for a moment and then asked, "Tell us how you happened to be on the bridge."

"Well," sighed Frank, "I was going across

when I met some men in the dark. They caught me and I fought them. Then some one hit me on the head and I guess they threw me over into the river. Anyhow I had a hard time with all my clothes on, to swim to shore. When I got into the woods, I guess I just happened to find the road. That's where the man in the auto came along just as I was falling. I guess he caught me and I thought I ought to get away from him."

"Pretty good!" exclaimed the doctor, who had been watching Frank's face during this narrative. "That's a clear story, my boy. I guess that bump on the head didn't crack you any. And your clothes certainly were pretty well soaked. But who——" Dr. Curry cast a quick glance at the priest and then, rising slowly from his chair, he continued, "But I guess that will wait. That's enough talking for the present. I'll dress that lump and leave some medicine for you to take. Sleep well to-night and in the morning you can give us the details of your adventure."

A few minutes later, as Father Campion escorted the doctor to the door, he asked, "Well, what do you think of the boy's story?"

"A tale of adventure, all right, and very probable. The chap's inquisitive and fell foul of some night prowlers. But I suspect he has a guess as to who they were and why they seized him. He's concealing something! Perhaps he'll tell you in the morning."

"It just happens I know something about the two boys and why they came to Forest Island," Father Campion informed his friend. "Brother

Alpheus, Director of the Academy at Hercules, wrote me a few things and asked me to stand ready to lend a helping hand, if necessary. Perhaps this boy will give me the complete story to-morrow."

Doctor Curry left the house and Father Campion returned to Frank's bedside. He found him resting comfortably, his eyes heavy with sleep. On the priest's approach, however, he aroused himself and tried to talk. But Father Campion held up a warning hand. "I'll let you tell me just one thing," he said. "After that you must go to sleep. Are you Harvey or Edward Lawrence's nephew?"

"I'm Frank Lawrence, Father."

"There, that's enough. Doctor's orders, you know. We'll talk about it in the morning." He turned the lights low and withdrew to the farther side of the room and in a very few minutes, with body and mind at rest, and soothed by the medicine, Frank fell into a deep sleep, the calmest and most peaceful slumber he had enjoyed since leaving Hercules. Father Campion lingered until he caught Frank's deep breathing; then he went to his own room across the hall, leaving the doors open, so that he could hear Frank, if he should become restless or call for help.

On the following morning, when Father Campion returned to the rectory after celebrating an early Mass, he went to Frank's room. He found that young gentleman propped against the head of the bed, eating a large and substantial breakfast furnished by the generous housekeeper.

Father Campion laughed heartily when he saw the amount of food piled on the tray and on the table beside the bed.

"Does Mrs. Dalton expect you to eat all of that?" he asked.

"I guess so," Frank answered, grinning. "I told her we had cooked most of our own meals since we came to the mountains and she thinks we did not feed ourselves properly."

"I wonder if there is anything left for me," Father Campion said, with a mock frown as he moved toward the door. "I'll go down and hunt around for a bite. You eat all of that," he called back over his shoulder, "and if there is nothing left in the pantry, I'll go out to the neighbors."

Frank heard Father Campion's laughter echo through the house as he made fun of the housekeeper for the meal she had sent upstairs. Mrs. Dalton took his jokes very placidly and declared that the poor starving boy needed plenty of food after eating so many meals he had cooked himself. What did male creatures know about cooking, argued the housekeeper; and so the controversy continued, until Father Campion finished his simple and frugal breakfast and returned to Frank's room.

"Well," he said, sitting near the bed and pretending to scrutinize the almost empty tray, "I lost the argument, as usual." He laughed heartily for a minute. "You look better this morning," he said, examining Frank's face. "Do you feel as well as you look?"

"Yes, Father," Frank assured him. "My head does not hurt and the lump has gone down."

"Delighted to hear it. You were worn out last night. You certainly had been handled roughly."

"It was a real experience," Frank said, and added with a sigh, "I hope I'll never have another like it."

"Seeing you're feeling so spry, suppose you tell me just what has happened since you came to the mountains. Maybe we can get to the bottom of this highway robbery. I know why you came. Brother Alpheus wrote and told me about your uncle's request."

"Do you know Brother Alpheus?"

"Yes, indeed, Brother Alpheus and I were schoolmates in New York. He told me about your vacation, and I saw you the evening you arrived, when Pete Tahawus met you at the station."

Frank did not answer but his hesitation might be just a search for the right way to begin his story. However, Father Campion decided to encourage him a bit.

"Well," said the priest, after a slight pause, "I have helped you boys on two occasions now and if I know the whole story of your adventure, perhaps I could help you again."

"Oh, I'm going to tell you all about it, Father," Frank exclaimed eagerly. "I held back last night, because I was so tired and—and I was ashamed to tell it before the doctor. It looks to me as if my uncle plays a pretty bad part in it and I was ashamed to acknowledge it."

Father Campion waited for Frank to begin and

tell his story in his own way. "Don't get excited. It's just a story now, you know. You've had enough excitement for a while. Take your time and don't tire yourself."

Frank leaned against the pillows and began. He told it all, from the minute John David had appeared at the Academy with his strange proposal until the present time. He included all the complications, the fat man on the train and the dwarf in the tower doorway, as well as his own and George's suspicions. When he finished, Father Campion arose from his chair and slowly paced the room. After a moment or two he stopped and looked at Frank over the foot of the bed.

"Your story is very strange, just because it seems to contradict itself so often."

"That's what George and I thought, Father. No matter how we tried to figure it out, things didn't hang together. I'm sick of the whole business!"

"There is one thing that pleases me in your story and that is the part Dick Tahawus plays. His actions show that he is conquering his savage pride and arrogance. It's not easy for Dick to come to help you strange boys, especially when his father seems to be on the other side. No one knows that better than I do."

Father Campion returned to his chair and continued speaking. "Something has been troubling Dick lately and he has acted in a very queer manner. Perhaps he has known more about his father's affairs than you and I do. When I told Dick

to take a trip to Forest Island and meet you boys, he was confused, then he got angry and hurried away from me."

"Dick is worried over his father and he wants to save him from this gang," Frank said. "After Dick rescued us, we agreed to solve the mystery; but after what happened to me last night, I'm going home!"

"Tut! tut! You're safe and sound and why not stay and see the thing out? A good soldier doesn't give up until the battle is over. You won't desert your chum George Harvey, will you?"

"I won't desert him. We'll find George and Dick to-day and George and I'll go back to Hercules, and figure out some real way of earning our college expenses."

"In one way you are right, but after what's happened maybe Dick will need *your* help, to save his father—it may be from the gang or it may be from himself. That doesn't matter. Will you desert Dick now? and go away firmly convinced that your uncle is a villain?"

"I didn't think of that. My only wish is to get away from Forest Island—and my uncle," Frank answered.

"That brings us to the second big question. How do you know this dwarf is Edward Lawrence?"

"Well, I guess I don't know for certain, because I never saw my uncle. But who else could it be? The dwarf fits the description exactly."

"Who gave you the description?"

"Big Jim Morton."

"Um!—Yet Big Jim Morton is the leader of this gang. Would Jim Morton take so much trouble to describe your uncle to you, if they are both working together in some unlawful scheme?"

"I don't know."

"It's against all common sense," Father Campion declared. "I have my doubts about that dwarf and I don't think he's Edward Lawrence. Remember, I came to Tamarack one year ago and I do not know your uncle, because I've never seen him. Nevertheless, if I were in your place, I should believe John David, your guardian, and not Jim Morton, the night-prowler."

"I believe Mr. David; but I am afraid my uncle's fooling him, too."

"My boy, from what I have heard of your uncle he is a great man in his own way. A man of his standing in the community and of his wealth and business ability would not stoop to such petty tricks to scare a couple of boys. That's the second unreasonable point in your explanation."

"He said he would put us to a test."

"Frank," Father Campion said very earnestly, "I don't believe this dwarf is your uncle. If I were in your place I should remain and find out for sure whether he is Edward Lawrence or an impostor. In fact, you almost owe that to him."

"What good will that do?" the boy objected.

"If he is not your uncle, he ought to be exposed, at once, as an impostor. Perhaps, then, you will discover who attacked you on the bridge and help the authorities break up the gang of night-prowlers. If the dwarf is your uncle, surely

it is best for you to know now just what sort of man you're dealing with."

"If the dwarf is my Uncle Edward, then what?" Frank asked.

"Then it's a question of whether or not he's an honest and law-abiding citizen. We can decide all that later."

Frank rested his head against a pillow and closed his eyes. A smile crept over his face when he thought how cleverly Father Campion had hedged him in with his arguments. If he remained at his post, he could accomplish an immense amount of good, no matter what he might discover. It all seemed so clear now, there was nothing more to say.

"Well, Father," he said at last, opening his eyes and gazing at the ceiling, "you win."

"I'm glad of that," Father Campion responded heartily, rising and pacing the floor. "Now the next thing, we must map out a course to follow. First, there's George and Dick to get in touch with and then, John David. This is Friday morning and your guardian received your letter sometime Wednesday, at least the one I posted. If he intends to help you, to answer, you should hear from him to-day."

Father Campion returned to his chair and sketched a plan of action. Some of his enthusiasm fired Frank and they soon agreed on the course they would follow after they had got in touch with George and Dick.

XVIII

JOHN DAVID RECEIVES A LETTER

"THURSDAY Morning, June 24," John David said, consulting the calendar as he walked to his desk. His morning mail was arranged in neat stacks and he took the letter that lay on top on the last pile. Its postmark was Tamarack, and he smiled as he leisurely opened it. His smile soon gave way to a frown and he drummed softly on his desk with the tips of his fingers. Turning back the sheets of paper, he read the letter a second time before putting it aside and quickly examining the rest of his correspondence. He did not find the letter he was seeking. The one in his hand was from Frank Lawrence, the letter the boys had given to Father Campion to post. Father Campion had dropped it in the Tamarack post office on Tuesday night, but since it did not leave the village until Wednesday morning, it was not delivered in New York for another twenty-four hours. It would have been clear to any onlooker that something in the letter both puzzled and irritated Mr. David and when a second search through the mail on his desk failed to reveal the letter he wanted, he reached for his telephone, but pausing a moment, he turned again the pages before him.

FOREST LODGE
Tuesday Evening, June 22

Mr. John David.
DEAR GUARDIAN:

This is my first opportunity to write a letter since our arrival, and there are two reasons for the delay. Firstly, we were very tired after our long journey north, and, secondly, we have tumbled into a mystery and we want some information from you to help us solve it.

Upon our arrival in the Adirondacks and especially since reaching Forest Lodge, our days and nights have been full of excitement and strange experiences. I shall relate some of these queer happenings and ask your advice and help.

In the Utica depot, George noticed two men watching us very closely. On board the Adirondack Express, one of them sat with us for a while and was friendly and entertaining. His name is Jim Morton and he said he was a friend of Edward Lawrence. He told us many things about my uncle and he informed us that Mr. Lawrence was known by the name: "King of the North Country." Mr. Morton said that Uncle Edward's enemies called him "the Mountain-Dwarf." When I told him that Uncle Edward was in Alaska, he appeared surprised and said he had seen Edward Lawrence take a train at Utica for Tamarack Lake last Sunday. He all but said that Uncle Edward was back in the North woods.

Peter Tahawus met us at the Tamarack station and took us to Forest Island. That same night we were awakened from our sleep by strange noises on the beach. There were bird calls, flashing lights, like signals, and the sound of men walking between the boathouse and tower. Toward morning, we saw a hunch-back with long arms, standing on the beach.

We told Pete, but he gave us little information. He said maybe the people were fish pirates or campers and the bird cries were an owl and a loon.

To-day Pete took us fishing down the Tamarack River and we trolled among the stumps near the bridge on

the Tupper Lake highway. When we got tired, we put in near the north end of this bridge, and while exploring the woods for a spring to get a drink, we came upon an old hunter's shack. In front of it stood Pete, Jim Morton and the man named Don. They were talking about us and were persuading Pete to scare us and drive us home. We sneaked away and later Pete picked us up and we went back to Forest Island. To-night after supper, Pete told us we were going into the woods with him to-morrow. He said he must examine some timber on Lawrence Lake for next winter's cutting. When he told us to get ready he said, "It will fit in fine with Mr. Lawrence's plans for you."

To-day near the hunter's shack, we heard Jim Morton tell Pete he must get us out of the way, because they expect a big consignment of something. We agreed to go with Pete, thinking we can learn something about these strange happenings. We have decided not to go home until we find the solution to this mystery.

Can you help us? Do you know what all these strange happenings mean? You said my uncle was in Alaska and here he is on Forest Island, plotting trouble for us. We think he lives in the lookout tower, but we cannot prove this, because the windows are boarded and the doors are locked and Pete said my uncle does not want us to enter the tower. Some one occupies the tower, because we saw a light shining through a crack in the boards.

I shall give this letter to Father Campion to mail. Father Campion is pastor of the church that stands on a hill overlooking the lake. He will post it to-night. I shall write another letter to you and ask Pete to mail it. I shall give it to him to-night, and if you do not receive it, we will want to know what Pete is doing. Perhaps he is carrying out my uncle's orders. Do you know anything about it? Is my uncle fooling us all about his Alaska trip? Will you give me some information? Kindly send your letter to Father Campion's house, Church of Our Lady of the Snow.

I shall await your reply with eagerness, and I trust always to remain,

Your dutiful ward,

FRANK LAWRENCE.

Putting aside Frank's letter, John David consulted his memoranda and learned that he had no appointments after eleven o'clock. Reaching for the telephone he called the number of an uptown hotel and a minute later was talking to his party. "Good morning, Alf—yes, it's important—new developments——All right, let's make it 11:15,"—so he spoke and hanging up the receiver, he turned to his work.

A few minutes after eleven o'clock Mr. David hurried from his office and took a subway uptown. When he reached the hotel, without pausing at the desk, he took an elevator to the tenth floor and proceeded down the hall to room 1014. A knock on the door opened it to him immediately and he was greeted in a cheery, friendly manner.

"Good morning, John—wasn't expecting to see you so soon again. And such a scowl!"

"Good morning, Alf, yes, maybe this is a tempest in a tea pot, but I thought you'd be interested."

"What's on your mind this morning?" Alf asked, sinking into a chair and inviting the lawyer to do likewise.

"Well, I have an Adirondacks case that may tie up with something you know. Just got the letter this morning. Here it is."

Mr. David handed the letter over, and the other read it slowly and carefully. As he read, his eyes

narrowed and an expression of surprise, then anger, crept into his face. He read it again to make sure of every point, before he turned to the lawyer.

"There is but one thing to do," he said, answering the questioning look in John David's eyes; "call up Bill O'Day and ask him to come here immediately."

Mr. David went to the telephone and called the office of William O'Day, chief of the United States Secret Service. "Yes, come up now—we're waiting," he told O'Day emphatically.

"I was on the point of calling on Bill," Mr. David said, as he returned to his chair, "but I decided to see you first. I'll bet the chief knows something that ties up with all this. If not, he will find out very soon, eh Alf?"

"Yes, many strange things happen in that north country. The Canadian border is near enough to encourage smuggling. Not long ago, the secret service men raided a counterfeiter's plant in the southern Adirondacks. It had been there for two years and contained the most perfect outfit ever found."

"I am worried about the boys, Alf. Do you think I ought to take measures to protect them, before we go any further?"

"Of course, if the boys interfere with their plans, those men would not hesitate to use violence. But I'd say those chaps have some common sense, to judge from this letter—and—well, let's see what Bill intends to do."

The conversation was interrupted by a sharp

rap on the door and John David hurried across the room to admit William O'Day. O'Day was of medium height, but solidly built. His actions were quick and vigorous and on his smooth shaven face and in his snappy blue eyes, there was a worried expression, a mask to cover his constantly shifting glances. This was the man whom so many men hated and feared before they met him, and loved no better afterwards. His relations, however, with these two seemed cordial enough.

"Hello, gentlemen, hello," he greeted, his deep voice rolling around the room like soft thunder. "What's the news," he cried, sinking into a chair and settling himself comfortably. John David told him the story of the boys' trip to Forest Island and their adventures in the mountains. Alf handed Frank's letter to the Chief, and O'Day read it through and laughed softly.

"Well, well," he cried, "at last we are on the right track. We have been hunting that crowd for months and we could never catch them at their tricks. Lo and behold, two boys go to the Adirondacks for a happy vacation and uncover a set of criminals, the worst set that has operated since we captured that counterfeiting gang."

O'Day drew a notebook from his pocket.

"My men have been in that section for some time. They reported that they had tracked some of the criminals to Tamarack, but beyond that point they could find no more clues. Now this letter tells us just what we want to know. I'm going to Tamarack and join my men, and I think

you'd better come with me—eh, Alf? I can't let that gang escape."

"Yes, I'm with you for a little fun—and John too—that is, if John can spare the time."

"Of course I can," Mr. David cried.

"Come along, gentlemen," boomed O'Day. "I'm pleased to have you. In fact, you can help me, because you know that section very well."

"I know it thoroughly," Alf said laughing. "I place myself at your disposal."

"Very good," O'Day cried. "Now, we must go to Tamarack and escape notice."

"We can do that nicely," Alf answered quickly. "We'll take the night train out of the city and arrive in the mountains to-morrow morning; not get off at Lake Clear Junction, but ride on to Onchiota. That has a few houses and a sawmill and the rest is barren waste. In Onchiota we can get some one to take us to the Village of Mirror—about ten miles from Tamarack. I can take you to a camp there and you can tell your men to meet us to-morrow noon. It's roundabout but we'll not meet any one who's looking for us. There are so many fellows who are 'not at home' when they know Bill O'Day is calling," he ended with a laugh.

"That's a good scheme," O'Day cried, rising to his feet. "John, you get six tickets and send four to my office. I'll have to take some strong-arm men with me. We won't know one another at the station or on the train. We're dealing with a clever crowd of crooks, you know, and it must be safety first. Give me the name of that camp. I'll send a code message to my men at Tamarack."

XIX

THAT NIGHT AT PETE'S CAMP

WHEN Dick Tahawus left George Harvey in the cave, he paddled toward the eastern shore of the lake. The darkness of the night did not trouble him, because he was familiar with every island and every rock in the lake. He knew the nature of the shore line and with proper precaution he could paddle close to it and avoid accidents.

The black outline of the forest loomed into view. Even on the darkest night, if one looks up at an object, using the sky as a background, one can distinguish its outline. The Indian boy knew this and he was able to gauge his distance and guide his course. Turning his canoe toward the left, he paddled slowly and cautiously until he reached the north shore of the lake and then he headed his canoe west and paddled toward his father's camp. Arriving at a small strip of land that jutted into the water, he beached his canoe, hid it in the bushes and walked toward the camp.

The trail skirted the shore but was hidden from the lake by a thick screen of trees. Dick's progress was slow, because he paused often to listen, but the only sound he heard was the soft swish of the water on the beach. He knew the danger that

lay ahead on the dark path and he used every precaution to avoid an encounter in the dark, similar to the one he had had near the river.

Dick stopped at the edge of the woods near his father's camp and listened for the slightest sound that would reveal the presence of the night-prowlers. Ahead of him loomed the dark outline of the house and beyond was the dark gray water of the lake reflecting the bright stars that burned in the heavens. There was no noise, there were no lights, save the stars in the sky, and emboldened by these signs, the Indian boy advanced toward the house. When he drew near, he swung in a wide circle and went toward the boathouse. He dropped to his hands and knees, then, and lying prone upon the ground, examined the pier and its surroundings. He found a rowboat tied to the dock, lazily bobbing on the waves that chattered around the pier.

Dick was satisfied with his inspection, for now he knew that his father was at the camp. Circling back, he approached the rear of the house and crept close to a kitchen window. The room inside was dark and he could hear no sound. He walked around the house and was on the point of abandoning the search, when the low murmur of voices reached his ears. Careful listening convinced him that the sound came from the southwest corner of the dwelling, and he soon detected a faint pencil of light shining through a crack in a curtain. The window was close to the ground and it was but a matter of cautious movements to obtain a view of the room through the blinds.

This was the storeroom and standing in the

center of its small space, Dick recognized his father and the dwarf. Moreover he heard plainly every word they said. The two men faced each other—Pete rigid and defiant; the dwarf shaking and quivering in his anger.

"The boys have escaped, I tell you," the dwarf cried, his voice full of rage. "They're back from Lawrence Lake and your boy is with them. He brought them back and its your fault, you fool Indian—unless you think you're double-crossing us!"

"I think I am a 'fool Indian' to get mixed up with you and your gang," Pete said calmly, looking down at the man in front of him.

"That's no reason for you to make a fool of the rest of us!" the dwarf exclaimed hoarsely. "Why didn't you obey orders and stay with those kids!"

"You know the reason. What is the use of asking?"

"You're crazy," snarled the dwarf. "We wouldn't cheat you out of a penny, but you've bungled the whole business."

"You are blaming all this on to the boys. How do you know these boys are the ones you ran into to-night?" Pete asked.

"How do we know?" shouted the other. "Didn't the men get one of them on the bridge and didn't I run into two others on the island?"

"You say so," Pete answered, still speaking in a voice the very calm of which irritated the other. "Where does my boy Dick come in if there were only two?"

"Our men caught one on the bridge, I told you," the dwarf snapped back.

"Yes, and you also have told me that he got away. Later, two boys appeared on the island. Where does my Dick come in?" persisted Pete.

The dwarf's anger and hatred overcame his prudence and he jerked something fom his pocket and thrust it into Pete's face.

"Do you see that? What is it? Whose is it?"

Pete gave a slight start as he took the object and examined it.

"It's Frank Lawrence's cap," Pete said, twisting it in his fingers.

"I thought you'd know it," the dwarf sneered. "The men found that cap on the bridge after the boy escaped. That boy was spying on our men. They caught him, but he put up a fight and got away by jumping into the river. This was on the bridge. And all that happened just about the time I grappled with the other two boys on the island. They didn't have on wet clothes. Your Dick helped them escape. They couldn't get out of the woods any other way."

Pete stood rigid during this recital, and his large hand closed and unclosed on the cap he held. As the dwarf's story proceeded there came with it a suspicion and a fear. He doubted the truth of the dwarf's statements and with that doubt came the fear that Frank had met foul play.

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"I did," the other cried.

"You did not," Pete said flatly. "You told

me the men met the boy on the bridge and you said no more."

"You make too —— much fuss."

Pete's fingers closed tightly around the cap; he threw his head back proudly and when he spoke his tone was harsh.

"Let me warn you," the Indian said bitterly; "if any harm comes to that boy, I will make a fuss that will be heard from here to New York! Bill O'Day's office will be the first to hear it."

A stream of foul words flowed from the dwarf's lips, but Pete cut him short and continued.

"If any harm happens to these boys, you are responsible to me. I have said it before. I went into this game of yours under those conditions and you promised me. If you break faith with me and harm or try to hurt these boys, then I owe you no faith."

The dwarf turned on Pete and all the hatred in his nature shone from his eyes. He drew his right hand toward his belt and his fingers felt for the gun in its holster. His lips parted and he moistened them with the tip of his tongue. Pete saw these movements and he leaned closer to his opponent and continued speaking.

"You said the men caught Frank Lawrence on the bridge and that he escaped by jumping into the river. Maybe it is true. If it is not,—if your woodrats knocked him on the head and threw him into the river—then I will settle with them and with you, too." Pete had his own hand on his gun.

"You'll squeal, eh," the dwarf cried hoarsely. "I'll show you what I'll do to squealers!"

He snapped out his revolver and shot—but Pete was too fast for him. With the quickness of a panther, he had leaped forward, clutched the dwarf's wrist and swept the gun to one side. There was a flash, a report and the bullet buried itself in the wall. Mad with fury, the dwarf fought to free himself, but Pete flung him against the wall and tore the revolver from his hand.

"You toad!" the Indian cried, pinning the long arms of the hunchback to his side and crushing him against the wall. "Hanging is too good for you!"

With a quick movement, Pete freed one hand and jerking the dwarf's hunting knife from its scabbard, flung it to the other end of the room. Then he stepped back and covered him with his revolver.

"I am through with you and your gang, through forever," Pete said earnestly. "I will now take you down to the dock and you can row back to the island in my boat. I will search for Frank Lawrence and when I find him, I will know what to do. Also, you will get ready to leave the tower at once."

The dwarf crouched against the wall like an enraged animal waiting to spring. His burning gaze did not wander from Pete's face, but in spite of the Indian's advantage and the gun leveled at his chest, he continued to curse Pete and threaten him.

"If you squeal, I'll kill you. Remember that, Pete Tahawus!"

The Indian was unmoved by his threat. He

opened the door; took the lamp from the shelf and motioned the dwarf to move. The latter walked out of the room into the kitchen and Pete followed and closed the door of the storeroom behind them.

Quivering with excitement after witnessing this drama, Dick Tahawus crouched close to the house. He heard the door open and footsteps sound on the porch. He saw the two figures move down the slope toward the pier and he heard their footfalls as they tramped across the boards. Dick waited for nothing more. He ran around the house, plunged into the woods and hurried to the place where he had hid his canoe.

As he felt his way along the trail, his mind was in a turmoil. What he had just heard and seen filled him with strange emotions. He had no name for the feeling that swept over him when he realized that his own father had been willing to join in with such a crowd of criminals. Then came thankfulness when he thought of his father's words, that he was through with them forever. But the dangers were not yet past. He caught in a flash the significance of Frank's letter which he himself had mailed, and the dwarf's threat to kill his father wasn't just words!

Tossed about by his emotions, Dick stopped abruptly as a new thought came to him. His father had parted from this crowd and would work for the boys alone. Why not go to his father, tell him what had happened and join hands with him in the search for Frank? In his father they would find a strong aid and their combined forces would

rout the night-prowlers. But first he must get back to George. His father was safer as the enemy of these men and on his guard against them than he would be as their ally.

Satisfied with this conclusion, Dick hurried down the trail, found his canoe and paddled toward the island and the cave. George was sleeping soundly when he entered their hiding place, but Dick's flashlight in his face awoke him.

"That you, Dick?" he asked sleepily.

"Yes," the Indian boy answered. "Go to sleep again. I won't tell you any news until morning."

Dick rolled himself into his blanket and fell into a troubled dose.

When Pete Tahawus marched the dwarf down the slope and out on the pier, the uppermost thought in his mind was to find Frank Lawrence. He knew he was taking a risk in turning the dwarf loose, but he also knew how great a risk the gang were running! When the black night had swallowed the last shadow of the hunchback pulling away from shore, the Indian returned to the house and prepared for his journey. He would make a thorough search of the river and if he found no trace of the missing boy, he would go to Lawrence Lake and learn positively whether or not the boys had escaped.

Pete took his pack basket from the storeroom and put his provisions in it. As he walked across the living room for his blanket that hung upon a peg in the corner, his gaze fell upon the picture behind which he had hidden Frank's letter. He

lifted the picture from the wall, but no letter fell to the floor.

"Huh, it's gone!"

Pete gave a grunt of surprise and alarm. Gradually a smile crept across his bronzed countenance as a light broke upon his mind and brought with it a possible explanation. If Dick had found the letter and read it, he had learned about the boys' proposed trip to Lawrence Lake. Perhaps that was what had happened, and three boys were really trailing the gang. It didn't matter now—but it showed up Dick as a more clever chap than his father! At least Dick was no "fool Indian"!

Flinging his pack basket across his shoulder, he put his arms through the straps and placed it upon his back. He took his high-powered rifle from the wall, extinguishing the light and left the house. He walked to the boathouse, using every precaution, because he knew the character of the men who were in league with the dwarf. Pete fully realized his danger and he understood that his life was in peril because the dwarf and his men would seek revenge. But that was a part of the business in hand.

Pete launched his canoe, and kept close to shore as he paddled toward the east. He made no noise as he proceeded and he silently worked his way to the east shore of the lake, and then south until he reached the Tamarack River. He did not go down midstream but turned his canoe into a small stream that ran from the lake and snaked its way through the swamp that bordered the channel of the river. A careful guide could paddle a canoe

down this, if he used extraordinary precaution. It was a difficult journey in the day, but at night it was dangerous, even with powerful lights, and Pete was attempting it in the dark.

Slowly and carefully he moved down the small stream until he drew near a point of land that jutted from the bank. He drove his canoe towards it until he grasped the limb of a tree. With the help of this he dragged the canoe across the swamp, until he reached solid ground. Leaping to shore, he placed his canoe upon his shoulders and started down a trail that led along the river bank toward the bridge.

After he had hid his canoe in the bushes near the river, Pete went through the woods until he reached the bank of the brook that flowed past the hunter's shack. There were no lights and no sounds and he crossed the stream to the hut and examined it. It was empty and Pete knew the men had returned to their homes. Retracing his steps, he launched the canoe on the river and started his search.

The Indian paddled up and down near the bridge, keeping close to shore. He realized that the darkness was all against him, but he could not rest. His conscience troubled him and it drove him to action. He went among the stumps and glided around them with uncanny skill. At many points he beached the canoe and in spite of the danger, he called Frank's name repeatedly.

The gray dawn streaked the heavens with a few silver bars and the black curtain of night lifted, revealing the river and the shore wrapped in a

filmy mist. Pete was below the bridge, at the point where Frank had clambered from the water and lay upon the muddy bank. Pete drove his canoe up on shore and began his examination of the mud, aided by the feeble light of the dawn. When he arose from his hands and knees, a smile spread across his countenance and he gave a grunt of relief. He had found fresh tracks and they were the imprint of a boy's shoe. Moreover, there was but one set of footprints, indicating that the boy was alone.

Hiding his canoe in the bushes, Pete took up the trail and followed it into the woods. As the light of the newborn day penetrated the darkness of the forest, Pete found the trail easily: footprints in the sandy soil, the leaves and moss torn up by the boy's shoes, a rotten limb of a tree lying on the ground and crushed by a heavy heel, these and many more signs having a meaning for an experienced woodsman. The trail ran in a circle, then went straight toward the southeast until it reached a wide path that ran through the woods. Brushing aside the bushes, Pete stepped out upon this path and found himself looking into the muzzles of two high-powered rifles.

"Pitch up your hands, and be quick about it!" a harsh voice called from behind a tree.

With a quick movement, Pete leaped backward toward the bushes,—but it was too late. He was struck a crushing blow upon the head and sank to the ground unconscious.

XX

THE RACE IN THE STORM

A LOW, mournful, whining noise aroused Dick and he wondered sleepily what it was. It came again, louder and more insistent, and it was accompanied by a swishing and gurgling sound that was uncanny. He stared into the semi-gloom that surrounded him. Sleep slowly lifted from his brain and he realized where he was. Throwing aside his blanket, he sat up and when the strange noises sounded again, he understood their meaning. He switched on his flash light and aroused George.

"What's the matter; where are we; what time is it?" George asked, sitting up and staring around.

"Wait a minute; one question at a time," Dick answered, laughing at his friend's eagerness and confusion.

"The matter is this," Dick continued, "there's a storm brewing. Do you hear the wind making that queer noise as it blows through the opening of the cave? Do you see the waves boiling on the shore? We are in the cave where I took you last night, and the time is fifteen minutes after one."

"I remember everything," George said, leaning his elbows on his knees and resting his chin

in his cupped hands. "What did you find out last night?"

Dick narrated his adventure. George remained silent for a long time after the Indian boy had finished his story. He too realized the nature of the desperate men they were opposing and he sickened when he thought of Frank.

"Poor fellow! He's paying dearly for his vacation all right. Do you thing the dwarf told the truth when he said that Frank jumped into the river?"

"I don't know what to think. We must hope and pray for his safety. My father will search for Frank and he will find him. But come, now, we must leave," Dick said, gathering the camping outfit and storing it in the canoe. "We can't stay here in a storm. The waves will swamp us and water pours through the roof."

They clambered aboard their boat, and when the canoe touched the open waters of the lake, a driving wind caught it and flung it toward the rocky shore. Dick plunged his paddle into the boiling water and by a supreme effort, righted it and kept it from the jaws of the hungry rocks. Then he paddled slowly and carefully towards a sandy point of land that jutted into the lake. When they reached their destination, they lifted the canoe from the water and turned it bottom up over the camping outfit.

"That will keep our stuff pretty dry," Dick promised.

"What's on the program now?" George asked,

following the other up a path that led inland, "and where are we?"

"Back on Forest Island, and first we'll find out if there's any one on it. If there's no one around, we'll explore the place. When the storm breaks, we can take shelter in a little house over on the northwest shore."

"How can we tell whether the dwarf is here or not?"

"We'll examine the boathouse and if the *Drag-on-Fly* or the other motor boat is not there, we'll take it for granted that they've all gone off."

They climbed a bank and walked through the woods toward the boathouse. When they reached a high point of land that overlooked the camp, they stopped and surveyed their surroundings.

"How will you get into the boathouse? Frank has the key."

"Here's my plan," Dick said, taking off his clothes. "I'll creep to the lake, behind that fringe of bushes. When I get behind the boathouse, no one can see me from the lodge or the lookout tower. Then I'll swim out and dive under the door—it only goes a little way down into the water you know—and I can come up inside the house. If there's a motor boat missing, we'll decide that the dwarf is not on the island.

"The door on this side has a spring lock," Dick continued. "If everything is safe, I'll open the door and signal you. Bring my clothes when you come. If both the motor boats are there, I'll come back the way I went."

Dick ran down the bank and slipped into the

water. Swimming close to the boathouse, he disappeared around the corner. When he arrived in front of the door, he took a deep breath, dove under the door and came up inside. A motor boat rode on the water in the pool, but it was not the *Dragon-Fly*. Satisfied that no one was in the boathouse and deciding that they must take a risk, Dick drew himself out of the water and clambered up on the dock. He opened the door and signaled George.

"The *Dragon-Fly* is not here," Dick whispered to him. "We must take a chance and explore the island, hoping that the dwarf and the others are away."

The Indian boy donned his clothes as he spoke. Slipping back the catch on the lock, he secured it.

"We'll leave this door unlocked. We may want to come back this way."

Dick jumped into the motor boat and examined the engine and found it in good condition and ready for immediate use. Clambering upon the dock, he pointed to a crank on the wall.

"That controls a windlass that lifts the door leading into the lake. Come along, we'll explore the island."

They opened the door and stepped out. A gust of wind struck them and made them gasp for breath. A cloud of fine sand was lifted from the bank and showered upon them, stinging them and making them turn their backs to the angry wind. When the sand shower had passed, they ran toward the tower and crouching close to it on the side that fronted the lake, they agreed upon a plan.

"See," Dick said pointing upwards, "climb up the stones, the way you did last night, and perhaps you can get a peek in that window."

Dick scanned the lake, but he did not see a boat. He went around the tower and watched the lodge, while George climbed up to the window ledge and seated himself upon it. There was a small knot in one of the boards, and he gouged it out with his knife. This gave him even a better view than the crack could afford and he saw boxes and packages stacked along the wall, but no one was in the room. Satisfied with his inspection he descended quickly and Dick joined him.

"Nobody home," he informed Dick. "Let's try the door; maybe we can force the lock."

They tried the door, but found it firm and solid. Dick drew a bunch of keys from his pocket, and selecting one long, thin key, he tampered with the lock, hoping to throw the tumblers and snap back the catch. He worked patiently while George circled the house and kept a sharp lookout.

The wind was sweeping across the island, kicking up the loose sand and hurling it in clouds out over the lake. In the northwest, great black clouds darkened the heavens and from the angry, moving mass came vivid flashes of lightning and the deep-throated growl of thunder. With startling rapidity, now, the storm was charging across the heavens, sending the frightened animals to their lairs and the timid birds to their shelters in the trees.

Unmindful of the turmoil around him, Dick kept at his task, until his patience was rewarded. Sud-

denly the key turned in the lock and the catch flew back. With a low cry of triumph, he called to George, who was on the opposite side of the tower, keeping guard. George turned to join his companion, but at the instant his attention was attracted to the pier back of the lodge. With a startled cry of warning, he ran around the tower and shouted.

"Look, Dick, some one is near the ice house!"

Dick caught a clear glimpse of the men walking toward the lodge. There were three of them: the dwarf and two others.

"Come on, George, get out of here. Make a dash for the boathouse."

"They'll catch us in there."

"No, they won't. It's the only way to escape."

Like frightened deer, they leaped across the sand. They had covered half the distance when a shout arose behind them.

"They see us," panted Dick, as he flung open the door and plunged into the boathouse. He locked the door and called an order to George.

"Jump in and start the engine!"

Dick himself was whirling the windlass. The door shot up from the water at the same instant that the engine in the motor boat began to chug. They were none too soon, for the men had reached the door and were hurling their combined strength against it. They realized that they were too late when the sound of the motor reached their ears and they gave up their futile efforts when they saw the boat leap out and plunge through the turbulent waters of the lake. Their angry yells arose above

the storm as they left the boathouse and rushed across the island.

"There they go!" George said. "They'll get the *Dragon-Fly* after us."

"We'll beat them," Dick answered.

"The *Dragon-Fly* is a faster boat!"

"We have a good start and this boat is no slow poke."

Dick turned all his attention to the craft. Under less skillful guidance, it would have been swamped, for the white-capped waves seethed and foamed around it. The wind shrieked across the lake and threatened every minute to lift it from the water and hurl it against the rocky sides of one of the many islands about them. The mass of black clouds had leaped from the troubled heavens and hung low over the earth, belching its fiery bolts of lightning and ear-splitting peals of thunder.

"They're coming," George shouted, gazing over his shoulder.

"Let them come; they'll never get us."

"Where are you heading?"

"Round Pond."

"What about the river and the lock?"

"There's where we'll beat them."

Dick guided the boat toward a clump of islands grouped closely together.

"We'll take a short cut to the river, between those islands. They can't follow—it's too dangerous, and we'll gain time and get a chance to get above the lock before they catch up."

Dick sped his boat through the narrow channel

that divided the two larger islands of the group. It was a dangerous passage and George sat tense, a prayer on his lips and fear in his heart. He closed his eyes on one occasion when he saw some huge rocks protruding from the water and more rocks jutting from the sides of the islands. When he opened his eyes, the boat was in open water again and that danger was passed.

"We cut off half a mile," Dick cried. "Look—to the left, there goes the *Dragon-Fly* rounding the islands. They can't get us now."

A gust of wind roared across the lake and the storm broke in all its fury. The rain lashed down in torrents and drenched the boys. The violent waves tossed the boat about and tried to plunge them to the bottom of the lake. The flashes of lightning and the peals of thunder added to the mad confusion of earth and sky.

"I see them again!" George shouted, raising his voice above the noise. "They're gaining on us."

The rushing wind carried Dick's reply away. With muscles tense and eyes straining, George watched the *Dragon-Fly* bear down upon them. Fear was slowly gripping him, when he heard Dick shouting to him, and this time he understood.

"Here's the river! We'll beat them now. They can't go full speed up here with the *Dragon-Fly*. We're safe!"

The boat lunged ahead and swept from the lake into the channel of the river. This part of the Tamarack joined the lower lake and Round Pond, and it was narrow and winding. Both sides of the

shallow stream were lined with stumps, upturned roots of trees and marshy bogs that rendered navigation dangerous and almost impossible for large boats.

The type of launch the boys were in rode this stream with comparative ease and safety, because it was built along the lines of a guide boat. At the speed they were traveling, however, an experienced eye and steady hand were needed to avoid disaster, and Dick Tahawus possessed both.

"We're losing them," George cried. "We're beating them now. Their boat has stopped. No, it hasn't. They're coming again, but they've slowed down!"

Crouched in the middle of the boat, George watched the *Dragon-Fly* until a bend in the river hid the pursuing launch. Then he turned and gazed in the direction they were racing. They swept around a bend and George gave a startled cry. The river ran in a straight line and ended abruptly at the gates of a small lock with a lift about five feet, that allowed boats to pass around a falls and travel from one lake to another. The waterfall was on the south side of the lock; while to the north a small stream flowed around it, joining the river above and below. Toward this small creek Dick guided the speeding launch. When he drew near it, he shouted a command to his companion.

"Stop the engine, George!"

George obeyed instantly, and on its own speed the boat drove up the creek, tearing through the overhanging bushes. Dick did not wait for the

launch to stop. He caught the painter, leaped into the water and ran beside the boat until the counter-current checked its onward rush. Then he dragged it upstream. At his command George jumped from the boat and joined him in the water. The shallow stream had only just enough water to float the boat, and the current and the small cascades did not stay its progress.

"Take this rope and drag the boat upstream until you come to the river. Walk in the center of the stream and you won't have any trouble," Dick commanded as he sprang up the bank of the creek and ran through the woods toward the lock. He found the lower gates open and he leaped across the lock and unhooked one of the upper panels. Before it could swing out he returned to the north side. In like manner, he unhooked the second gate and swung it open. With a loud roar, the water poured through the lock, from the upper to the lower level. Tumbling, swirling, foaming, it rushed down the narrow channel of the river, leaping forward like a maddened, hungry animal.

The *Dragon-Fly* rounded the bend in the river and was rapidly approaching the straight narrow channel that led to the lock. The man at the wheel saw the torrent of water rushing upon them, and he shouted the alarm. It was too late to do anything and the men realized that they were trapped. With a roar, the on-coming flood struck the *Dragon-Fly* and lifted it into the air. Then with a great heave, it flung the boat into the swamp that bordered the narrow stream. The propeller churned the green slime and stopped abruptly,

choked with grass. The sputtering engine died, as the boat settled in the mass of slime, grass and branches of trees that surrounded it.

Bewildered and confused, the men strove desperately to keep the *Dragon-Fly* from capsizing. The wind and rain lashed at them, as they plunged around to save themselves. The heavens poured down lightning and thunder and nature laughed at them and their evil designs.

When Dick saw the *Dragon-Fly's* disaster, he leaped into the air and shouted taunts and challenges at the discomfited men. His words were drowned by the tumult around him, but his pursuers saw him and knew he had caused their downfall. The Indian boy ran up the bank and joined George. He told him what he had done and what had befallen the dwarf and his companions. They dragged their launch into the river, shouting and laughing as they went. When their merriment passed, they clambered aboard the boat and started toward Round Pond.

"That was a narrow escape," George panted. "I thought we were lost."

"Very few explore the creek that runs around the lock. I thought of it the minute they started after us."

"What about the lock? You did not close it."

"Don't worry about that. Those woodsmen with the dwarf will get to the lock and close it. Then they can get the boat out of the swamp, maybe."

The boat rounded a narrow bend in the river and glided toward a broad lake.

"Here we are," Dick cried, "Round Pond—Middle Lake. We'll go to an island near the south shore and hide for a while. If the dwarf and his men don't decide to follow us, we'll go up to the Bartlett Carry and buy something to eat."

"That sounds pretty good to me," George sighed.

XXI

FATHER CAMPION ACTS

FATHER CAMPION and Frank Lawrence had decided upon a plan of action after viewing the situation from every angle. They agreed that Father Campion should search for George and Dick, assure them that Frank was safe and then bring them to the rectory. The priest was certain he could find them, for he was a good woodsman and he knew the trails that Peter Tahawus and his son used. He had become more than familiar with the lakes and rivers and with hidden streams of this section, and he felt pretty confident that he could find the boys before the day passed. He knew all of the places Frank had mentioned in his narrative and he felt safe in saying that he would succeed in his mission.

It was nine o'clock before Father Campion was dressed in his camping clothes and ready for the search. As he started down stairs he heard the front door-bell ring and in the hall he met Dr. Curry.

"Good morning," boomed the physician. "Why the woods outfit?"

Father Campion drew him into the office and told him of his mission.

"Perhaps you'd better examine the boy first,"

the priest said, "and then I'll tell you the story of his adventures. You may have something to suggest before I start on the hunt."

The doctor's loud voice awoke the echoes in the house, and as he climbed the stairs, he hurled questions at Father Campion incessantly.

"Well, young man," he cried, entering the room, "you look very well this morning. What's the news?"

"Very little to report, Doctor. All is quiet along the front," Frank answered with a smile.

"I couldn't receive better news," Dr. Curry said, as he slipped a thermometer under Frank's tongue and took hold of his wrist.

"Temperature and pulse normal," the doctor assured him, when this examination ended. "Have you any pains or aches?"

"No," Frank answered. "Even the lump on my head has stopped aching."

"Yes, and it has reduced its size," Dr. Curry said, as he ran his fingers over it. "If you're not too comfortable to move, I'd advise you to get up and toddle around the house to-day."

"Yes, Father," he said, turning to his friend, "he still needs some care but you can let him go outdoors and rest upon the veranda. A little fresh air and sunshine will help him along. Your experience has not hurt you very much," Dr. Curry continued, speaking to Frank. "I'll drop in to-morrow and give you a final look-over."

The doctor left the room with Father Campion and went to the veranda. He lit a cigar and smoked it slowly, as he listened to the priest's

summary of Frank's story. He showed his interest mainly by a series of growls and snorts. When Father Campion had finished, the doctor snapped the cigar from his mouth, waved it at his friend and boomed in his usual vigorous manner.

"The first thing for you to do is this; telephone to John David and tell him to come to Tamarack immediately. Ask him if he received Frank's letters. If he did not get them, tell him the trouble they are in and urge him to come at once. He may tell you something about the affair. Better do that before you begin the hunt for the other two."

"I hope he will give me some information," Father Campion said. "I've given up entirely the explanation that Mr. Lawrence has any hand in this matter—or is trying to scare his nephew."

"Scare him!" Dr. Curry boomed, puffing his cigar vigorously. "You put it mildly when you say that. Those cut-throats didn't waylay that boy, bang him on the head and throw him into the river merely to scare him. In my opinion, we are dealing with a dangerous set of criminals. They were ready to kill that boy upstairs and if the other two lads fall into their hands, I'm afraid to think of what will happen to them."

"Here's what you'll do," the doctor continued, speaking rapidly. "Go away from Tamarack and do your telephoning. Don't call Mr. David from your house or the village. If we are dealing with a syndicate of crooks, they may have some one on the wires, and we don't want to get caught—or give them a chance to escape."

"Desperate criminals," Father Campion said slowly. "Yes, it seems clear that these men are engaged in some unlawful traffic. The puzzle is, what part has the dwarf in it, and who is the dwarf?"

"That is the key to the problem," the doctor answered. "The description of the dwarf tallies with Mr. Edward Lawrence's appearance."

"Shall I consult Sheriff Jim Cawdry and ask him to help me round up the two boys?"

"No, no; not yet," the doctor answered. "When you talk to Mr. David, you can ask him what steps to take. You search for the boys alone. No one will suspect you, when they see you paddling around the lake or streams. And don't waste a minute. Act and act quickly," the doctor cautioned, as he arose from the chair and walked towards his automobile.

"I won't delay long," Father Campion assured him. "I'll run down to Tamarack Inn and see Mr. Bannon, the manager. He'll put in the call for John David and I can talk from the private office."

"That's the idea," Dr. Curry said, climbing into his car. "Let me know what luck—especially if you need any help."

When the physician sped down the road, Father Campion returned to Frank's room. He found him dressed and sitting in an easy-chair near the window, fingering a book that lay in his lap. He was looking through the window and there was a wistful expression in his eyes. He turned as Father Campion entered and as he raised his

face, the priest was startled by the expression of suffering he saw on the boy's countenance. To the priest with his experience in dealing with human hearts, it was painfully clear that Frank was struggling to crush feelings of hatred; to overcome a desire to seek revenge upon the man who had abandoned his father when he was in distress, and who was acting now in this underhand, cowardly manner. Frank hungered for some one related to him by ties of blood, and his only relative living, Edward Lawrence, was apparently treating him shamefully.

Father Campion paused but a moment before he interrupted the boy's thoughts.

"I have changed our plans, Frank. Before I search for George and Dick, I'm going to Tamarack Inn and have a talk with Mr. David, over the telephone. I'll ask him to come to Tamarack immediately, and whether he received your letters and we'll see if he has any news or instructions for us." Frank nodded his head.

"I'm going to Tamarack Inn," Father Campion continued, "so we won't have any confederate of this crowd of criminals on our trail. If they scent our movements, they may get away before we can capture them, you know—and we want to make a regular Secret Service haul."

"Do you think there's any chance that Mr. David will come to Tamarack," Frank asked, "or give you any information?"

"Mr. David must act one way or another, when he fully understands the situation—explain it

from his end of the wire, or come here to clear it up."

Father Campion took Frank's hand and pressed it vigorously.

"Put worry aside. We shall clear this up in a short time."

"I am worrying about George and Dick," the boy replied.

"Don't bother about them. Dr. Curry is sure they're perfectly safe. Dick knows as much about the woods and streams as his father and he's just as cunning. No doubt the boys are worrying about you; but, you see, you are safe. Have a nice quiet time until I get back, but I guess you'd better not go out. We don't want any of your enemies to discover your whereabouts."

Father Campion left the house, and backed his automobile out of its shed. He sped down the road towards Tamarack Inn and he was thankful that the highway led through the woods and that few automobiles were on the road, for once again, he broke the speed laws and the engine was crackling with heat when he drew up in front of the hotel.

Mr. Bannon listened with interest to his brief story and the call for John David was soon placed. There was a long delay and when some one in Mr. David's office finally answered the telephone, the priest learned that the lawyer had left the city. It was Mr. David's secretary talking and she gave him no more information, merely stating that the lawyer had gone away on business. Father Campion was disappointed as he hung up the re-

ceiver. However, the best that he could do was to arrange with Mr. Bannon to call New York later in the day and try to get in touch with Mr. David. He could easily notify Father Campion if he found the lawyer at home.

On the return journey, as Father Campion thought over the whole affair, he became convinced of one thing; that Frank's guardian held the key to the mystery and without him a clear and quick solution was impossible. These musings reacted upon him and he grew dispirited. He did not relish meeting that hungry, haunted expression in Frank Lawrence's eyes. He realized that the boy placed great faith in him and he had held out promises of success in their efforts.

When he came to the fork in the road, at the eastern end of the lake, Father Campion turned to the right, motored along the main highway a short distance and then guided his car down a private drive that ran to the lake shore. This narrow path ended at the door of a boathouse. Beside it stood a roughly built garage and into this the priest drove his car. He locked the automobile and then entered the other small building.

A hurried glance around told him that Dick's canoe was gone. He took his own canoe from a shelf, and placed it on the water of the pool. He secured his paddle, fishing tackle and landing net, and clambered aboard. It took but a few moments to push the canoe into the lake and lock the doors behind him. Then he paddled out toward the Tamarack River.

As he approached the eastern end of Forest

Island, Father Campion stopped, fixed his tackle and started trolling. His purpose was evident. His movements must not attract the attention of the dwarf and his crowd. He realized, also, that he must not remain near Forest Island too long, because his presence in that locality might bring suspicion upon him. Undoubtedly these men knew that Dick was leagued with the other two boys and just as surely they knew that Dick lived with him, and it was possible that these criminals were watching his movements.

Back and forth he paddled near the eastern shore of the island. He examined the beach and the woods carefully, but no one appeared and there was no signal. If the boys were around, he hoped they would see him and he knew they were shrewd enough to suspect his mission. Three times he passed close to the mouth of the cave; but he knew nothing of its existence and the boys inside were asleep.

Giving up his quest, Father Campion continued across the lake toward the Tamarack River. He consulted his watch and learned it was twelve o'clock. He allowed the canoe to drift down the river slowly while he scanned both banks for the slightest signal or for any clue that would reveal the boys' whereabouts. He paddled close to the north bank until he came to the point where Cold Brook emptied into the river. Sweeping to the opposite side, he started upstream, keeping close to the south bank. When he reached a point below the bridge, his sharp eyes detected the spot where Frank had dragged himself from the water.

He drew close to the shore and while he pretended to fix his trolling spoon, he examined the place carefully.

The soft mud was tracked with footprints, large and small. This was the place Frank described, but it was not possible that he had made all the footprints now discernible in the soft mud. Some one had discovered this place and had followed Frank's trail through the woods. It might be the boys themselves and with this chance of coming upon them, he decided to try the experiment. Carefully concealing his canoe he started inland.

Father Campion had not traversed one hundred yards when he dropped to his knees and examined a little patch of sand. He had found a whole circle of confused footprints and they were not made by boys. As he arose to his feet, he heard someone moving in the bushes. He whirled around and found the muzzles of two high-powered rifles thrust into his face.

"Pitch up your hands quick," a harsh voice commanded.

Father Campion obeyed with alacrity.

"Get on to the disguise of this one. A hunting suit and a Roman collar," one of the men said, laughing softly.

"Gentlemen, this is a mistake," Father Campion protested.

"Tell that to the marines," the other growled. "Come on, now; about face, move and don't look back. When we get you down to camp, we'll let you talk."

Father Campion turned and went down the trail, his hands held over his head, the two men following with the muzzles of their guns jabbed into his back.

XXII

THE CAMP ON THE RIVER

THE night train from New York to Montreal was late and it did not reach Onchiota until seven-thirty on Friday morning. John David and his friend Alf descended from the sleeping coach and walked leisurely toward a row of lumber piles that stood back of the station. There were only two persons on the platform to meet the train; one was the station agent and the other a much bedraggled lumberjack who had spent the night at a dance held six miles below at Raytown. The station agent was too busy to pay attention to the travelers and the lumberjack's brain was too befogged and his eyes too dim for lack of sleep to notice them. This gave the two men an opportunity to reach the lumber piles unnoticed and to signal Bill O'Day and his men.

At the end of the lane, an automobile was parked under a tree. It was a closed car and when the six men entered it, they drew the shades. The car glided down a slight grade, swerved on to a road and started across the flats.

"It didn't take you long to get this," Bill O'Day whispered to Alf, who occupied the seat next to him.

"I sent word to Tamarack last night. We're

still safe. Did you notice there were only two people at the station; the agent and a tipsy lumberjack?''

''We've got to go careful just the same,'' O'Day answered. ''If these men are the crooks I suspect, they'll be watching this railroad all the way from Montreal to New York.''

Bill O'Day pulled aside the curtain just enough so that he could examine the country through which they were traveling. The road ran across a flat, level stretch of gleaming sand and rounded the foot of the mountain. A few stunted pines and clumps of bracken were the only living things that the unfruitful soil could nourish and no beast of the field found shelter under them and no bird of the air dwelt in their branches. The peak toward which they were speeding was a towering mass of rocks, swept bare of all vegetation. It loomed against the blue sky like the great gray ghost of a mountain that had once glowed green with living vegetation, but had been cursed for some evil fruit it had brought forth.

''Huh,'' O'Day exclaimed, as he replaced the curtain. ''This is not a beautiful section of your Adirondacks. No man or animal could exist in this neighborhood.''

Alf chuckled as he answered, ''Yes, but you see, Mr. O'Day, this isn't exactly a pleasure outing. Surely you will admit that we're likely to escape detection here. Our driver is taking us to Mirror by a roundabout road, to avoid Tamarack and the larger hamlets. The journey is longer, but it is safer.''

They continued on through the barren country, across flats of gleaming sand, under the frowning brows of towering mountains and only occasionally through a stretch of cool green woods that resounded to the full-throated songs of the birds. Finally they swept around the eastern foot of White Face Mountain and came upon the State road where the river roars through the flume.

"Thank goodness for a smooth road," O'Day groaned, shifting uneasily. "If I ever wish to lose any one, I'll know where to take 'em. Of all the wild, untamed, uncivilized sections of the world, we've just jounced over the worst."

The men laughed at the chief's gruff humor and then they fell silent, knowing that they were drawing towards the end of their journey. When they reached the Village of Mirror, the driver avoided the main street, taking a roundabout way until they came to a camp situated upon the east shore of the lake. He stopped the car in a clump of trees and the men alighted and entered the house. Breakfast awaited them and they needed no urging. That part of the morning's work proceeded without any formalities.

"Alf, where's your telephone?" O'Day asked. "I must get in touch with Charley. I sent him a night message to go up to the Park Side Inn and I'd call him when we got in."

"You really do not demand much, Bill O'Day—telephones in shacks like this—but seeing it's you, there you are. If Charley's here in Mirror, tell him to wait for the car. We can trust the chauffeur. He's reliable."

"Is that you, Charley?" O'Day asked, after a few moments on the wire.

When the chief received the password from Charley Jones, he ordered his lieutenant to remain at the Inn until an automobile of such a description and such a license number called for him. There must be no confusion or mentioning of names.

Charley Jones arrived while the travelers from New York ate their breakfast, and gave his chief a detailed account of the activities of the detectives who were working in this section.

"I received your message and I came to Mirror immediately," Jones continued, after narrating his fruitless search for the notorious criminals that infested the north country.

"I hope you have brought some information," he said, speaking to Chief O'Day. "That crowd has baffled us long enough. Some of the men are working in the neighborhood of Tamarack, especially around the Lower Lake. They have a cleverly hidden cache and we can't find it. We're camped on the Tamarack River, but I'm afraid they'll stop operations and move to some other point before we can get them. I haven't seen any of my men since yesterday afternoon."

"This will give you some information," O'Day said, pointing to a letter that John David held toward him. "Two boys on a pleasure jaunt have beaten us at our own game. Read that and tell us what you think of it!"

Charley Jones read the letter and when he fin-

ished, he gazed at his companions with a pleased smile on his face.

"Well, if that doesn't beat Sherlock Holmes!"

O'Day chuckled softly.

"It's time for us to hand in our badges, Charley. We're getting old and sightless," the chief said, pushing his chair back from the table. "Well, does that make matters any clearer?"

"Clearer?" Jones said, rising, "It clears the whole situation."

"Gentlemen," O'Day cried, arising from his chair, "we're going over to the camp on the river and see if our men have caught them yet. If not, we'll have a good old-fashioned raid to-night and here's hoping they'll all enjoy the surprise party to the limit! What is it, Charley—ten years, or life?"

"I'll take you to the camp in a roundabout way," Charley Jones assured them.

"I love these roundabout trips," grumbled O'Day.

The men left the house and crowded into the automobile. It sped from the yard, down the hill past the railroad station and on into the woods. The driver took an unfrequented dirt road that ran through the trees and joined the main State highway two miles below the Village of Mirror. On the level, smooth State road, the car sped rapidly for twenty minutes, and then it left the highway and turned to the left. Directed by Charley Jones, they guided the car down a narrow trail that led through a thick wood and ended on the banks of the Tamarack River. This old roadway

was two miles above the Village of Tamarack and was little known and unfrequented. The detectives had discovered its usefulness in their travels.

In a thick clump of pines on the bank of the river, the driver stopped the car. The men alighted and entered an old log cabin that stood in the center of this glade.

"I have one guide boat hidden in the bushes on the river bank," Jones said, addressing Chief O'Day. "By fitting four of us into it, we can all cross in two trips. That is, we'll go as far as the lock and when we all get together again, we'll proceed to the camp on foot."

"All right, Charley, we're in your hands," O'Day answered, "but Alf here, and David and myself insist on making the first trip."

"As you say," responded Jones.

"Another thing," O'Day said, turning to the chauffeur, "I want you to stay here until we learn what our men at the camp have to tell."

"All right, Bill," Alf answered, "the car is at your disposal."

The next part of the performance would have delighted George Harvey beyond words. Charley Jones had been digging into an old cupboard in a corner of the shack and now he came forward with an assortment of old clothes and hats. At the same moment O'Day pulled a handful of hair from his pocket and disentangling it, handed Alf and John David each a false beard and mustache. The other men carried their own disguises and in a trice not one of their faces was recognizable. David and Alf were dressed in old coats and dis-

reputable slouch hats that came down well over their eyes. O'Day himself looked about like the lumberjack they had met at Onchiota and when he slipped on a stone just as he was about to enter the boat, Alf asked him if he had spent the night at the same dance.

The two trips to the lock were made quickly and without any suspicious incident. When the men were reunited, they hid the boat in the bushes and started through the trees toward the camp. It was a rough journey, because the trail led through the dense woods and it was seldom used. The men were thankful for the cool shade, for the sun was already high, and they trudged onward slowly and cautiously, following Jones.

Of a sudden, the wind sprang up and moaned dismally through the pines and when the men passed through a clearing, they could see that a mass of heavy dark clouds were rising to obscure the sun. A sharp flash of lightning sprang out of the west and a low grumble of thunder announced the coming storm.

"We'll have a shelter anyway," Jones assured the men. "Camp's just ahead."

From where they stood there was not the slightest indication of a break in the trees or the possibility of a shack. But detectives know only too well "how far, yet how near" may be the very object of their search.

"Wait now, we'll signal," said Jones. He gave a long varied whistle that resembled the call of the white-throated sparrow. He repeated this

three times and then came a similar answer from a clump of blueberry bushes.

"Way all clear," Jones assured them in a low voice, as he pushed through a thick screen of bushes followed by his companions. They walked slowly, heads bowed and bodies bent, because the bushes were clustered closely together and were several feet high. They had proceeded about ten yards, when they suddenly emerged from the bushes and found themselves in a clearing that topped a small hill.

"Hello! where did you get the army?" a voice called softly. A man stepped from the blueberry bushes that grew against a rocky ledge and as he spoke, he advanced to meet the newcomers.

"Oh, it's the Chief," he whispered, shifting his rifle to the hollow of his left arm and extending his right hand to grasp O'Day's. "And see what the tide brought in, driftwood and everything," he continued, greeting the three detectives who had accompanied the chief from New York.

O'Day introduced the detective to John David and Alf and in a few words explained the reason for this sudden arrival. The men moved along the brow of the hill, keeping within the shelter of the trees, and as they proceeded, O'Day told Ed Barton that he had good news for him and he hoped their long search was at an end.

Barton raised his hand and the men halted.

"There's our camp, Chief," he said, addressing O'Day.

Below them was a cup-like hollow, completely surrounded by small hills thickly covered with

trees and bushes. In the center of this miniature valley, great towering pine trees lifted their spires to the sky and in the midst of this clump of wood, Ed Barton told them, the tent was pitched.

"Nicely camouflaged, of course," he said, "green canvas and all. The Tamarack River is beyond that hill," pointing toward the east, "and we can walk to it in ten minutes, through a rift in the hills."

"Give the signal, Charley," O'Day ordered.

Jones gave the white-throated sparrow's clear call and an answering signal came from the camp in the hollow. Single file, they marched down the hill, keeping within the shelter of the thick woods that lined the southern slope. The trail led directly into the camp and after a short walk, the men stepped from behind a towering rock and saw the tent five yards away. A detective stood at the opening, a rifle resting in the hollow of his left arm. He stepped forward and greeted his chief and the other new-comers.

"How is your prisoner?" Ed Barton asked, addressing the man who stood guard.

"He's all right. Very calm, but willing to talk when the time comes," the detective answered.

"Prisoner?" Charley Jones asked, looking inquiringly at Ed Barton. "You didn't mention any prisoner?"

Barton and his companion smiled broadly.

"Yes, we've been keeping the surprise for you," Barton said, turning first toward Jones and then toward the chief. "Fred and Joe were on the other side of the river near the bridge on

the Tupper Lake Highway when they caught this fellow following a trail. He was on the ground examining some footprints. They told him to pitch up, but he showed fight and Fred had to put him to sleep. They tied him and when he came to, they brought him into camp. He is a big husky Indian and says he's Adirondack Pete."

"Pete Tahawus!" John David and Alf cried in one low breath.

"You know him?" Barton asked.

"Here," John David said, handing Barton the letter he had received from Frank Lawrence, "Read that and you'll understand as much about this affair as the rest of us do."

Barton read the letter and handed it to the detective on guard.

"I'm beginning to see the light now. This fellow was searching for some one, because he was following the footprints. Fred and Joe traced them into the woods towards the river. But they ran in a circle and the men gave it up. They were anxious to get Pete into camp."

"Where is Pete?" O'Day asked. "Was he willing to talk?"

"Not when he came in," Barton answered. "In the beginning he didn't understand that we were detectives. When he was coming around, after the blow Fred gave him, he mumbled a few words that made us suspect he was connected with these crooks, but that he had fought with them."

"He's willing to talk now," the guard said. "When he got it through his head who we were and I told him we would get that gang, he seemed

pleased. Finally he said he would tell some things that he knew and I said he'd better hold them until Charley Jones came back."

"All right, bring him out and we'll get his story," O'Day cried, addressing the guard.

"Wait," John David said to O'Day. "Alf and I'll step behind those bushes and keep out of sight. Then we can check up on Pete's story. It might make a difference if he sees us."

"Good idea," the chief answered. "You'll find a log back there and you can use it for a grandstand. We'll make Pete face you and you can watch him."

The whole conversation had been carried on in low tones and Pete was all unprepared for his audience when the guard and two other detectives entered the tent and brought him out. The Indian's arms were tied behind his back and lashed tightly to his body. One end of the rope that bound Pete was tied to the guard and the other detectives stood near him, their rifles ready for any emergency. As they walked to the glade back of the tent, Pete's black eyes coasted around the circle of faces, and with a quick glance he appraised his captors.

"Well, Pete Tahawus," Chief O'Day said, walking toward the Indian, "I wonder if you are ready to tell us about yourself and your gang and what part you are playing in this game. My name is O'Day, William O'Day. I guess you know me, don't you?"

Pete's eyes widened with surprise, but only for

an instant. He displayed no emotion and his face was like a graven image.

"I know who you are," he answered grimly. "Every one who tries to fool Uncle Sam knows Bill O'Day."

"Glad they do," the chief said, smiling. "Now, Pete," he continued, "come across and tell us what you know. In the first place, what about those two boys who went to Forest Island and were placed in your care? Are they safe? If so, where are they?"

The suddenness of this question found Pete unprepared and he stared blankly at Chief O'Day. He gained control of himself quickly and his black eyes bored into O'Day's as he tried to read from the expression on the chief's face and in his eyes, just how much he knew. His efforts were fruitless, for he was dealing with a man whose face was like an iron mask. O'Day's countenance would never reveal the thoughts that were in his mind.

"I know more about the boys than you imagine," O'Day said. "If you care to save yourself and do the right thing, tell us a straight story."

Pete's body drooped and his calm expression faded. He realized that his opportunity had come and in all justice he was bound to help the boys, since they had been placed in his care.

His savage soul rebelled against telling the secrets of the gang, even of such a gang, but the boys were in danger and his only hope of helping them now, trussed up as he was, lay in claiming the aid of Bill O'Day. "I will tell you about them if you will work fast to find them, especially Frank

Lawrence. He has disappeared and I do not know where he has gone. I was searching for him, when two of your men captured me."

"To make things clear, let us have a continuous story, from the time you took the boys into the woods and camped on the shores of Lawrence Lake," O'Day said. "Since you are willing to talk, I'll tell you what we know. Before I begin, let me ask you a question. What happened to the letter Frank Lawrence gave you to post?"

"I read it and hid it behind a picture that hangs on the wall in my cabin," Pete answered calmly. "Last night I looked back of the picture and the letter was gone. I think my son Dick found it; read it and then went in search of the boys."

"Those boys were too clever for you, Pete. They wrote two letters to John David. They gave one to you and one to the priest to mail. As far as we know, the letter they gave you never reached its destination. We've got the other, so we knew all about the boys' adventures until you took them to Lawrence Lake. Now, you tell the rest," O'Day replied.

With an eagerness that surprised them all, Pete poured out his story to his captors. He did not enter into details about his companions or their work, but he mentioned their names in connection with the boys.

"I know nothing more about them," Pete continued. "I was searching for Frank when your men caught me."

"Listen," Ed Barton said, when Pete finished speaking.

A long, clear bird call came from the rift between the hills. Ed Barton answered it and left the group, walking in the direction of the signal.

"It's Fred and Joe coming back to camp," Charley Jones told the chief. "I suppose the storm's driving them home."

The mass of dark clouds that swept from the northwest had overcast the whole sky. A vivid flash of lightning leaped toward the earth, followed by a crashing peal of thunder. The cries of frightened birds resounded through the wood and then a deathlike calm settled over all.

"Here they are now, just in time and I'm glad they came. Hello, they've got some one with them."

The approaching men disappeared behind a clump of bushes, were lost to sight for a minute, and then stepped into the clearing and joined the circle.

"Here's another prisoner for you. This one brings good news," Fred cried, as he drew back and told his captive to step forward. The prisoner laughed heartily and advanced toward the group. As he came into view of all the men, Pete Tahawus leaned toward him and a surprised cry sprang from his lips.

"Father Campion!"

"Yes, Pete, and I'm a prisoner," Father Campion replied, laughing.

"Almost," Fred said. "It's a good thing I'm a faithful church member and that I went to Mass last Sunday."

"Well, well, what's the explanation," O'Day

cried, shaking hands with Father Campion and the two detectives who accompanied him. "This game is getting interesting. Who's it now?"

"I'm it, and the joke's on me," Fred said. "We were searching the woods near the place where we captured Pete, following those footprints, you know, and we stumbled upon Father Campion. I told him to pitch up and he did. He wasn't as cantankerous as Pete. When I saw the Roman collar and examined his face, I recognized him for the pastor of the Church of Our Lady of the Snow. Then I surrendered."

"Father Campion brings us good news and some information," Joe informed the men.

"Pete," the priest said, walking toward the Indian, "I don't want to judge you until I hear from your own lips what part you are playing in this affair, but if you're working with those men on Forest Island, why did you allow them to attack the boys, especially Frank Lawrence?"

"I did not allow them!" Pete cried vehemently. "I warned them that if they injured those boys they would answer to me."

"They attacked Frank," Father Campion said. "They caught him on the bridge, struck him on the head and hurled him into the river."

Pete leaned closer to the priest and his eyes blazed with anger, as he cried, "Is Frank hurt? Where is he?"

"Frank is safe and is resting at my house," Father Campion answered.

Turning to Chief O'Day, the priest narrated

his part in Frank's rescue and recounted the boy's story. When he had finished, he turned to Pete.

"I hope you'll show your good intentions, Pete, by giving Mr. O'Day all the information he asks for. Your son Dick has saved you from an ugly situation and now is the time for you to do your part. Do it, Pete, for the boy's sake, and for the sake of your own honesty and justice."

"I am now ready to tell everything," Pete answered. "I warned them not to touch the boys and they have hurt them. I am not begging off, either, for myself. I may be a 'fool Indian' but I will take my medicine with the rest!"

"I'm glad of that, Pete," Alf said, walking from his hiding-place. "Make an open confession and clear up this queer mystery."

Alf and John David stood in front of the Indian and for a moment Pete was too surprised to answer. He looked from one to the other, and cried, in amazement:

"You! I thought——"

"Gentlemen," O'Day said, "here comes the rain. Let us retreat to the tent and get Pete's story there. After that we can lay our plans for to-night. Here it comes. Follow me!" he cried, making a dash for the tent just as the floodgates of heaven opened and the rain poured down.

XXIII

THE CAPTURE

EVENING came to the mountains, an evening filled with soft winds that ruffled the surface of the lake and whispered through the pine trees. It was a twilight filled with quivering purple shadows; delicate and light upon the mountain tops; dark and heavy in the valley. It was an evening filled with calm and peace, for nature had vented her fury in the fierce storm that had swept the earth a few hours before. Man was the only created thing not at peace with the God who had given him all these beauties to enjoy.

The men who were most disturbed that evening were the dwarf and his followers. When Dick Tahawus opened the gates of the lock and allowed the water to rush upon the *Dragon-Fly* and hurl it into the swamp, the dwarf and the two lumberjacks knews that they had lost the chase. While the storm raged and lashed them, they worked to free their boat. One of them made the shore and hurried to the lock, to close the gates. Then began the slow, difficult task of righting the motor boat and floating it upon the waters of the river.

It was four o'clock on Friday afternoon before the dwarf and his men had succeeded in freeing the *Dragon-Fly*. The engine and propeller were

unhurt and once they got started, the trip to Forest Island was quickly made. When they reached the boathouse, they found Big Jim Morton, Don and the other two members of their company awaiting them.

"What's the trouble," Big Jim asked, when he saw the men's clothing smeared with mud and soggy with water.

"Trouble enough," the dwarf answered bitterly, his eyes glowing with anger and hatred. "We're in so much trouble, that all we need now is O'Day and his men after us."

"And all on account of that Indian!" one of the lumberjacks cried.

"Those two Indians, you mean!" the other woodsman said, punctuating his remarks with a variety of unpleasant names.

The men went to the lookout tower and the dwarf told them of the encounter he had had with Pete the night before. He added the main points of their chase after the boys and how Dick Tahawus had foiled them.

"There's only one thing for us to do," the dwarf cried angrily. "We've got to get away from Forest Island. Pete's looking for Frank and if he can't find him or if he finds him hurt, he'll surely squeal."

"I guess he'll find him hurt all right. I gave him a nasty soak on the head before I threw him into the river," grumbled one of the men.

"It's Pete's fault," Don cried. "If he had stayed with those kids and kept them out of the way, we'd not be in this mess. And it's your fault,

too," he continued, snarling at Big Jim. "I wanted to croak that Indian and you wouldn't let me."

"No use whimpering now," the dwarf interrupted. "It's too late. We've got to clean up tonight and get away from this nest. Even if Pete don't blubber for a day or two, we've got no time to lose."

"It'll take us all night to get everything out of here," Big Jim informed them.

"And we'll have to do some quick planning. Haul in everything from the hunter's shack first and bring it here," the dwarf advised. "Then about midnight we'll get away in one load and shift the stuff to that island over in Middle Lake. We can lay quiet there until we get on to Pete's next move."

"That plan's as good as any," Big Jim said. "Come, let's go to work and pack some of this stuff now."

The purple-tinted evening that brought so much peace and tranquillity to the earth, found these men gathered in the kitchen of the lodge eating supper. Very few words passed between them as they hurriedly devoured their food. They realized their dangerous position and they knew they must work fast. A criminal begins to run before the policeman starts the chase.

As each man finished eating he took up his task. at once. The two lumberjacks who had stood guard entered the kitchen and snatched a hasty meal; then hurried to the boathouse and joined Don. They clambered aboard the *Dragon-Fly*

and with a rush the speed boat dashed into the lake and made towards the outlet.

While the men on Forest Island were planning their escape, Dick Tahawus and George Harvey prepared and ate their supper on a wild and barren island in Middle Lake. When the heavy purple shadows settled over the water, they started towards the river that connected the two lakes. Darkness had fallen when they reached this channel and they made their way down the river with a great deal of difficulty. Where the river narrowed, Dick stopped the motor and paddled the boat slowly and cautiously along the winding waterway.

"I wish we had more light," George whispered.

"We're lucky it's so dark," Dick replied. "We'd have a more dangerous journey if those men could see us."

When they approached the lock, Dick guided the boat towards shore and grounded it on a sand bar.

"Wait here," he whispered to George. "I'll go down and see if any one's waiting to catch us."

He returned in a little while and reported that the lock gates were closed and no one was on guard. They continued their journey, passed safely through the lock and finally reached the Lake-of-the-Clustered-Stars. Dick felt comparatively safe now and he started the motor, turned on the headlight and guided the boat toward an island.

"It took us over two hours to come down from Middle Lake," he whispered, consulting his watch. "We'll make Eagle Island and rest there until

after midnight; then we can go to Forest Island and try to discover what's going on."

"I hope we can find some trace of Frank," George said.

Dick stopped the motor and turned off the headlight, as the boat drifted toward Eagle Island. When the prow of the launch nosed its way into the soft earth on the bank, Dick and George leaped ashore and pulled the boat after them. They had scarcely landed upon the beach, when they were seized from behind and their arms pinned against their sides.

"Don't move and don't make a noise," a hoarse voice whispered. "If you know the password, whisper it; if you don't, keep quiet and don't speak."

The boys remained quiet, because they knew it was impossible to escape and their struggles would prove useless. Quickly and deftly, their captors bound their arms and gagged them. Their faces were turned inland and they were commanded to march.

"No fuss or nonsense now, or I'll knock you into the land of Nod," the hoarse voice threatened.

Their captors led the boys up a slight incline and took them to a clump of trees that grew behind some towering rocks. They received a command to halt, and a flashlight flared into their faces. A low, whispered exclamation came from the darkness and a muttered conversation took place in the background. Suddenly the gags were removed from their mouths and the hoarse voice spoke again.

"What are your names?"

"George Harvey and Dick Tahawus."

The word was passed into the darkness and the boys heard some one approaching them. The light flared in their faces again and a soft, well modulated voice said: "Yes, that's George Harvey."

Suddenly the light was turned on the face of the speaker and George gave an inarticulate cry of surprise when he looked into the countenance of John David. The light was flashed off and John David laughed softly and whispered to the boys to remain quiet until they learned the news. He told them the situation in a few words; assuring them that Frank was safe and that Pete Tahawus had joined their forces.

"Take them to the chief; perhaps they can give him some information," John whispered to the men who had captured them.

Their arms were unbound and they were guided through the darkness until they came to a small cave in the rocks. They met Chief O'Day and they poured out their story to him. Every now and again he stopped them to ask a question and it was clear that their discoveries helped fill in gaps in the chief's report.

"I suppose you boys are glad to take part in the round-up," O'Day whispered. "When all the men are on Forest Island, we'll get a signal. Then we'll surround the island and catch every last man of 'em."

The hours dragged slowly for the watchers on Eagle Island. At three o'clock in the morning,

the chief decided to draw his net in closer. He had given orders to delay the attack until all the men were on Forest Island and if possible, to await until the first faint streaks of dawn. Then the attackers would have sufficient light to recognize their own men from the criminals and the latter would have less chance of escape. All throughout the night, the chief had kept in touch with the movements of the dwarf's men and now he decided it was time to tighten the lines.

Launching their boats, the men who accompanied the chief started for Forest Island to warn his followers that the time had come for the attack. Besides his own men, O'Day had at his command the chief game warden and three deputies, as well as the sheriff with three men. Some were stationed on the mainland, while others skulked about on the lake in boats and canoes.

The black curtain of night rolled slowly from the heavens and the earth, and the sky was overcast with a strange gray color that sometimes precedes the dawn. A filmy mist hung close to the surface of the lake and aided the men in approaching the island unnoticed. As they drew near the shore, a slight breeze greeted them and drove the mist before it, rolling and shifting it, tearing it to tatters. It had already cleared the mist-clouds from the island and the attackers could see the lodge and the lookout tower standing exposed to view.

The boats touched the shore and the men landed, dragging their barks upon the shingle. Scarcely had they reached land, when a wild shout came from the rear of the lodge and two sharp pistol

shots rang out on the clear morning air. Before their echoes had died out, Chief O'Day and five of his men leaped across the sand and sprang up the steps toward the front door. O'Day had a key ready in his hand and it was but the work of an instant to unlock the door and dash into the house, followed by his men.

Confusion at once became supreme. The dwarf and his companions rushed to escape, according to their well-laid plans, but at every turn the avenues of escape were blocked. As Big Jim Morton rushed from the living room into the front hall, he collided with Bill O'Day. Before that fat, puffing individual could recover his balance, his jaw met the impact of O'Day's fist. With a feeble grunt of surprise, Morton sank to the floor. One of the detectives threw himself upon Big Jim and before he could recover from the blow, tied him, hands and feet.

O'Day sprang over his fallen foe and dashed toward the kitchen. The swinging door leading from the kitchen flew open almost in his face and before the chief could check his wild rush, he crashed against a man who had burst into the dining room. He struck at his adversary with his powerful fist, but his blow went wild. Before he could strike again or draw his revolver, the man closed in upon him and he found himself battling with the dwarf.

Here was an opponent worth while, O'Day had time to think, as the dwarf wound his apelike arms around his knees and lifted him from his feet. With a quick twist and lurch, the dwarf hurled

him to the floor and landed on top of him. He did not maintain this advantage very long, for O'Day caught him by the throat, snapped his head backward and struck him a blow on the temple. The chief struggled to his knees before the dwarf had fully recovered, and it was fortunate for him, because the dwarf had drawn his hunting knife. His efforts were futile for O'Day caught his wrist, and gave it a vicious wrench that sent the knife clattering to the floor. The chief's fingers tightened around the dwarf's throat and he threw him to the floor. When he had choked him into submission, he seized the cords which one of his men brought in answer to his call and together they tied his hands and feet and lashed him to the leg of a table.

A fierce battle was raging in the kitchen between the detectives and the lumberjacks. Revolvers, knives, chairs and fists were brought into play, until the two native woodsmen were subdued, but not until Joe had been eliminated also. When O'Day ran into the kitchen and viewed the situation, he shouted to Ed Barton.

"Where's Don?"

"The black-faced fellow? He went through that door," Fred called as he tightened the halter that bound one of the woodsmen. The chief gave the signal to advance and ran into the hall. A quick search proved that Don was not downstairs. Followed by his men, O'Day ran upstairs, leaped into the boys' bedroom and then ran out to the sleeping porch. He was just in time to see Don jump

from the porch into the arms of Charley Jones and two other detectives.

"All right, Chief, we've got all of 'em," Jones called to O'Day. "We caught the other two in the tower."

"Bring them into the kitchen," the chief ordered.

O'Day retraced his steps and found the crowd gathered in the kitchen. His eyes twinkled with happiness, when he surveyed the captured men,—Big Jim Morton, Don, the dwarf and their four accomplices.

"A good haul! At last, gentlemen, at last we have you. A merry chase you've led us, but here we all are! And the credit, mind you, belongs to those three boys, George Harvey, Frank Lawrence and Dick Tahawus."

"Chief," said John David, touching O'Day on the shoulder, "our friend Alf is in the library. He wants all of us in there; he has something to tell us. Bring in the prisoners."

XXIV

THE DAWN OF A PERFECT DAY

WHEN John David and the other men entered the library they heard loud cries of joy coming from the hall. George Harvey and Dick Tahawus were greeting their friend Frank Lawrence, who had arrived with Father Campion, just in time to see Don jump into Charley's embrace. George and Dick were pumping Frank's arms vigorously, thumping him on the back, asking him one question after another and not waiting for an answer to any.

"When you boys are through your gentle caresses, we'll join the company in the library," Father Campion called to them.

"Gentle?" cried O'Day, "why, I handled the dwarf gentler than that."

A shout of laughter greeted this sally, and the three boys turned to join the crowd. It was a large assemblage, including the captives and their captors. Frank and George paused on the threshold—in speechless amazement, for directly in front of them stood—two Mountain Dwarfs! The one wore muddy clothes, his face was cut and his arms were lashed to his sides. A few feet from him stood another man who resembled the captive in height, weight, stooping body, and long arms.

Between his shoulders was a hump, too, and his large head was covered with a thick mass of hair. One glance at his face, however, separated him by miles from any relationship with the captive dwarf. His face was mild, his eyes were kind and although his features were wrinkled and heavily lined with furrows, there was a gentleness about his countenance that was attractive.

"Well, boys, now that you have seen, do you understand?" John David asked the bewildered adventurers. "This 'Mountain Dwarf,' who has been disturbing your sleep, is a great criminal, late of New York City. But let me introduce my friend Alf, in other words, Mr. Edward Lawrence, of the North Country."

"Oh, I see!" cried George, ready to bound forward. But Frank held back. He turned from John David to Father Campion and all they had told him of his uncle seemed suddenly to become clear as he looked again at the fine face and gentle eyes of Mr. Lawrence. One glance at the captive dwarf and the whole fabric of his suspicions and hatred fell to pieces. In his weakened condition, the tears came in spite of him and when Edward Lawrence stepped toward him, Frank threw himself into his uncle's arms.

At this show of affection, Edward Lawrence's eyes also grew moist and after a moment he walked toward the fireplace. He stood there with his back to the men until he had controlled his feelings. Then he turned, called Frank to his side, and faced the circle.

"You'll forgive us for showing a little emo-

tion. Frank here is my only living relative and I think we understand each other now. Years ago his father and I were in business. We were brothers, but we could not agree. I was sick, and as a result I was sensitive and touchy. Perhaps my brother had his own faults—but anyhow, we separated. I came to the north country and gained health and success; but I was never reconciled to my brother. He died a few years ago, leaving his only child, Frank Lawrence, in the care of John David. That's when I found out a little of his circumstances.

"I watched Frank's progress and when he graduated from the Academy this June, I asked him to occupy my camp on this island and spend the summer here with his friend George Harvey. My first intention was to remain in the mountains and meet Frank occasionally and overcome his prejudice towards me. This plan was upset, for early in April one of my business partners called me west. We have interests in Alaska and he said I was needed out there. I started but stopped in Minnesota to consult a famous surgeon. He advised me to give up my trip and come back to this mountain country for special treatment. That's how I happened to get back to New York, on the day before Frank's letter reached Mr. David. Of course we had to consult Chief O'Day at once and he knew something about these night-prowlers. We hurried to the mountains and this is the result."

He finished speaking and looked at Pete Tahawus.

"It's your turn now, Pete," he said. "This mystery isn't quite clear yet."

"You blame me for playing traitor to you, Mr. Lawrence," Pete said, somewhat haughtily, "but I have my reason and still have it."

"I know your reason," Edward Lawrence said. "You think I have robbed you of your property near Lawrence Lake."

"Yes, you have! You and that other crowd!" Pete cried angrily. "You——"

"Wait, Pete," said Mr. Lawrence, checking the Indian's rush of words. "Hear my side of the story too, and you will know that I was an innocent victim when I bought that property, including Lawrence Lake and the surrounding woods. I heard you had claimed it, but it wasn't clear whether you had a just claim to it. Mr. David has worked on that problem over a year and he told me this spring that your title was good. I intended turning the property over to you when I got back from Alaska. That's one reason I hired you as a guide. After that, I was going to prosecute the men who sold the property to me.

"If I can't get any satisfaction from them I'll sue the State," Mr. Lawrence added. "In the meantime, Pete, I'll help you lumber that section. I'll advance you money and give you a right-of-way through my land and you can sell your timber to any one you wish. Or, I'll go into partnership with you, or buy the land from you."

Pete's eyes glowed with amazement and excitement. Before he could say a word, Mr. Lawrence checked him.

"Don't give me your answer now; think it over and tell me later. Now we want your story and you must spare no one."

"I—I think I see," Pete stammered, "but how could I help but hate you, Mr. Lawrence, when I thought you had joined hands with the T. and M. Company to rob me of my lands! Those timber lands belonged to my fathers and they do belong to me, no matter what kind of papers politicians have signed!

"I hired out as your guide last winter just so I could figure out a revenge! When I took possession of your camp on Forest Island and the camp on the mainland, a friend of Big Jim Morton's came along with just the right plan. One day I was in Panther Joe's and I was in a back room playing cards. I lost all of my money,—I was ugly. I guess Panther Joe was smart, too, when he called me in to his private room just then and asked me how my land deal came out. He told me that Mr. Lawrence had boasted in Tamarack that I'd never get that land back. Of course I was ready to believe all he told me and I was more set than ever to get even.

"Then when I was stirred up, Joe told me how I could make some money at Mr. Lawrence's expense—how Big Jim Morton, Don Seiter and a number of others were smuggling some whisky and a few other things from Canada and they would pay me well for the use of Forest Island to store this stuff until they could get it to their homes."

"When did you agree to this proposition?" Mr. Lawrence asked.

"The first week in April. In some manner, Big Jim Morton learned of your proposed trip to Alaska and he told Panther Joe, and that is the reason Joe asked for the use of Forest Island. With Mr. Lawrence out of the way, it would be easy to carry out the plans and no one would ever suspect anything. I agreed and they gave me a lump sum of money at the beginning.

"The day Mr. Lawrence left Tamarack, these men brought in a load of stuff and hid it in the hunter's shack, and that same evening they brought it to this island. One of Big Jim's men followed Mr. Lawrence to New York and shadowed him until he reached Chicago. This satisfied Morton and then the boxes and packages poured into the island in a steady stream, night after night."

"Pete," Chief O'Day said, "didn't you know that these packages and boxes contained opium, and that these men were taking the stuff to New York City and other places and selling it to those poor wretches who have contracted the drug habit?"

"I didn't know about it in the beginning," Pete answered. "They said it was whisky and a few other things they wanted for their own use. After the first week, I examined some of the cans and learned what they held. I told Big Jim that I was on to his game and wanted more money. There was an argument, but finally he paid me and paid well.

"After the first week Jerry Ring, that dwarf, appeared and Big Jim persuaded me to allow him to live on the island when he was in this neighborhood. The first two weeks, he was away most of the time but he returned and was here for three days before the boys arrived.

"When Big Jim and his gang heard that the boys were coming, they were upset, but not for long. They said that the dwarf would remain around Forest Island and show himself off and on, and his appearance would convince the boys that he was Edward Lawrence. After Morton and Don talked with Frank and George on the train and discovered how Frank did not care for his uncle, they decided it would be easy to scare the boys so badly that they would leave Forest Island and go home. That's one reason I took them into the woods and left them near Lawrence Lake all night."

Pete paused and looked around at Morton and the dwarf. Then he continued.

"What I have told you is not the only reason for these men using Forest Island and using me. This is something I have learned for myself and I only discovered it last Sunday."

"It's a lie, it's a lie!" the dwarf shouted, struggling to break his bonds.

"What's a lie?" O'Day asked. "Pete hasn't told us the reason yet. You're ahead of time. You give yourself away."

"Shut up!" Don snarled at the dwarf. "They can't prove anything."

"I can prove it," Pete cried. "You have al-

ready swindled a friend of mine from Alder Creek. He does not yet know that he has been cheated. Here is their real work up here, along with their smuggling game, and this is the reason they brought the dwarf here to pose as Edward Lawrence. I have seen papers and overheard conversations. They thought I was a 'fool Indian' and they did not pay much attention to me.

"Last March, a farmer down on Moon Lake struck oil and that gave the mountaineers the fever. Every one in that section of the mountains is talking oil. Big Jim and his crowd bought up some worthless land and started to drill. They formed a company, and issued stocks, but no one would buy. The mountaineers wanted to know who was backing the company and Big Jim Morton said it was Edward Lawrence. If he could persuade them that the 'King of the North Country' was backing it, the stocks would sell and then they could sell their worthless land and skip out before their game was discovered."

"More light," grunted Charley Jones.

"Any one would take that dwarf for Mr. Lawrence, especially if they saw him at a distance. That's why, I figure it, he went to the fake oil well near Moon Lake. He went around the property, and let people see him. The mountaineers got excited and they demanded stocks and started to buy land in that neighborhood. You see, they saw this dwarf and thought he was Edward Lawrence; and they saw some stocks with Mr. Lawrence named as president and his signature at the bottom."

"My signature?" Mr. Lawrence cried.

"Yes, it was forged," Pete replied intrepidly.

"It's a lie!" the dwarf shouted. "You can't prove it!"

"It isn't a lie and I can prove it," Pete answered. "You stole three or four of the letters Mr. Lawrence wrote me and you practised his signature. I have some of the papers on which you practised and here is one of the fake stock certificates with his name signed to it."

Pete drew a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Lawrence.

"A remarkable imitation," Edward Lawrence said, as he passed it to Chief O'Day.

"They have not sold many of those," Pete said. "They intended to wait until they had shipped all of these smuggled goods to New York. After that, while the detectives were on the trail of the smuggled goods, they could go to Moon Lake, sell their land and stock in a few days and then disappear from the mountains forever. They figured on another week of smuggling, then a quick rush of oil business, and then skip."

"Oho!" Chief O'Day cried, "I see more light too! What of that deal in Northern Michigan? The same cleverness, the same tactics in both cases! Well, boys, we have a good count against you now. Opium smuggling, swindling, forgery, and attempted murder and any one of these means a long stay at the Federal Prison."

"Bah!" Don sneered, "you can't prove all that stuff."

"I can!" Pete cried. "You sold some stock to

Bill Montaine over at Alder Creek. When you found how innocent Bill is, you hired him to advertise the stock and you told him to go among the mountaineers very quietly. You gave Bill a letter, appointing him an agent of your Moon Lake Oil Company. The dwarf signed Mr. Lawrence's name to it. You gave Bill a check for one thousand dollars for his work and you told him to keep the check and show it to the mountaineers. The check had Edward Lawrence's name signed on it. You told Bill not to cash the check until the first of August. By that time the sale would be over and everything cleaned up and you fellows out of the mountains. When Bill tried to cash it then, he would go to jail. And Bill saw that dwarf sign Edward Lawrence's name to the letter and the check. Last Sunday when I saw Bill, he still believed that Mr. Lawrence was backing the oil company. So there!"

"Tell it all, Pete," Don sneered. "You're putting yourself in jail with the rest."

"Not so fast," O'Day cautioned. "He's the innocent victim of your cleverness and trickery. We're looking for the real criminals, and even the State is lenient to a repentant sinner, you know."

"I'm willing to stand trial and take my medicine for my part in this game," Pete answered calmly. "When I went into this thing, I allowed them to use the island because they said the stuff was a little whisky they were bringing in for themselves. I needed money—Dick must go to college next year and the government had helped to steal

our lands. When I learned that this crowd was smuggling opium and was in this crooked oil business, I hardly knew what to do. Before I could decide, the boys came, and things began to happen, and this is the result."

"That's it, Pete, and if you didn't know what to do, your son did," Chief O'Day said. "Dick Tahawus has saved the honor of your house."

"Well, boys," Mr. Lawrence said, turning to the three young comrades who had stood breathless during this long recital, "I believe you have had enough mystery to last for the rest of your vacation. When I return from New York in another week, I'll settle on Forest Island with you. How's that? We'll need Father Campion and Dick and Pete to help us see the wonders of the Great North Woods, and next autumn you three boys can start college together. What do you say?"

The answer was a cheer, and Chief O'Day and his men roared an echo as they marched their handcuffed captives down the lane to the waiting boats.

THE END